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WEST AFRICAN SECRET SOCIETIES

DOCTOR OF THE EKONGOLA SOCIETY

(Frontispiece)

WEST AFRICAN SECRET SOCIETIES

THEIR ORGANISATIONS, OFFICIALS AND TEACHING

BY

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To The
District Commissioners
working in
West Africa
for whom there should be instituted a
New Order,
that of the
"KNIGHTS OF AFRICA"

FOREWORD

It is with a deep sense of obligation that I return thanks to all those who have so splendidly helped in the making of this book, especially to those Colonial Secretaries and Directors of Education, Provincial and District Commissioners and Secretaries for Native Affairs with whom I have had, as yet, no association other than their courteous and informative correspondence. I also wish to add my thanks for the encouragement extended to me of my publishers.

Amongst the illustrations is one photograph taken by my friend, A. M. Duggan-Cronin of Kimberley. It is published by permission of the Trustees of the McGregor Museum of that city, through the personal interest and kindness of the Curator of that institution, a lady widely known for her accomplishments and graciousness, and is one of the many pictures Mr. Duggan-Cronin has taken of native African life. Others of his gift will be published if ever I find courage to tackle the labour of putting into book-form my notes on the secret societies of the eastern and southern parts of the continent.

Once again I acknowledge the hospitality of the columns of *West Africa*, made possible by the goodwill of the Editor, Albert Cartwright; and the skill and patience of another friend, J. H. Parkinson, D.Ph., M.A., B.Sc., in correcting typescripts and proofs.

My one desire in this work has been to record something of the old tribal discipline and society organisation of West Africa, now slowly but surely

passing, and to do this as far as possible without an attempt "to point a moral or adorn a tale." It is an effort all too incomplete, but it may help somebody else to do better. For all mistakes and omissions I apologise. The words that some will consider incorrectly spelled may serve to enforce the need there is for some standardization in the spelling of West African place- and tribal-names.

In answer to the statement made recently that African native secret societies are "abolished and almost forgotten," I have only to refer to the issue of *West Africa* for December 1, 1928, in which there will be found references to the present activities of societies in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and the Gold Coast.

For the convenience of the reader I have throughout the book put the titles of the societies into capitals.

F. W. B.-T.

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SKETCH MAP.

(Illustrating "*West African Secret Societies.*")

1. MOROCCO.
2. ALGERIA.
3. RIO DE ORO.
4. SENEGAL.
5. GAMBIA.
6. FRENCH GUINEA.
7. SIERRA LEONE.
8. LIBERIA.
9. IVORY COAST.
10. GOLD COAST.
11. DAHOMEY.
12. NIGERIA.
13. FRENCH CONGO.
14. SPANISH GUINEA.
15. ANGOLA.
16. BELGIAN CONGO.
17. UPPER SENEGAL.
18. UPPER VOLTA.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY

Descriptive Note—Muhammedan Societies—Muhammedan-Pagan Societies—Pagan Societies—History of Pagan Societies—Grouping of Pagan Societies.

The Native Secret Societies found amongst the peoples and tribes of the West Coast of Africa are many. Nearly one hundred and fifty of them are referred to in the following chapters.

They can be roughly divided into

(1) *The Mystic and the Religious.* These approximate in organisation and purpose the Grecian Pythagoreans, the Roman Gnostics, the Jewish Kabbala and Essenes, the Bayern Illuminata, the Prussian Rosicrucians, and the world-wide Freemasons. In the course of the years they have evolved an official class that may be likened to the priesthood founded by Ignatius Loyola.

This group includes all the Muhammedan societies, all the Muhammedan-Pagan societies, and those of the Pagan societies known as Law-God, Priestly, Purification, Prohibition, and Protective associations.

(2) *The Democratic and Patriotic.* These are the tribal organisations that come under the titles of Agricultural Associations, Co-operative Societies, Dance and Play and Sports Clubs, Political Societies, Social Societies, Trade Guilds, and War Clubs. The last are included because they are now largely social organisations.

Some of these are showing the trend of the times by using as rallying cries great words like "Patriot," "Truth," "Reform," "Friends of the People," "Rights of Man," as do similar organisations in Egypt and England and Italy and Poland and Turkey; and fling out banners of challenge to all too hidebound to sympathise with "Young Africa." Some suggest that the organisers have studied the Muhammedan League and Fascism.

(3) *The Subversive and Criminal.* These have analogies with the German Totenbund (Band of Death), the Irish Ribbon Men and Fenian Brotherhood and Sinn Fein (Ourselves Alone), the Persian Assassins, the Mala Vita (Evil Life) of Naples, the Mafia of Sicily, the Ku Kluk Klan of Tennessee, and the Know-Nothings of the Southern States of America. They may be said to be akin to the American and European Anarchists and Nihilists and Communists, but with powers crippled, as yet, by over-zealous leadership. Most are modern of origin, transplantations from other lands, foreign influences only slowly becoming acclimatised, in contrast to the societies of the other groups, which are indigenous to the soil of Africa.

There are also Ethical and Religious (Theological) societies to be found in most of the larger towns, founded to exploit native thought and native doubts and native conservatisms; men and women banded together by their gropings after the ideals of The Friends of the Muses or the Knights Templar or European Ethical and Secular societies, but they are too exiguous and transient to be included here.

HISTORY

To discuss more conveniently the history of the societies, a division of them can be made into Muhammedan, Muhammedan-Pagan, and Pagan.

The first two are transplantations.

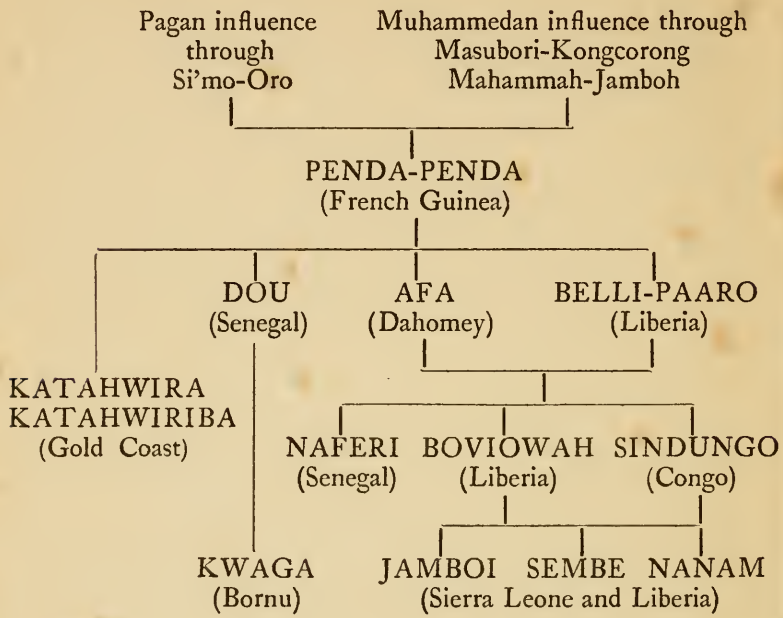
The Muhammedan Societies found along the West Coast were originally branches of the great religious fraternities of the North Coast. These were carried southwards and westwards by migrating Semitic, Libyan, and Libyo-Negroid families and septs, and by home-seeking ex-slave Negroids. They are few in number, being (to put them in their probable historic order) SIRRI, JAVIA-KARTAS, QAÏROWAN, MASUBORI, MORI, MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH, KONGCORONG, and BORI.

The Muhammedan-Pagan Societies evolved much later. Their presence, and their dual religious basis, is an advertisement of the ancient strength of the Pagan societies. When the Muhammedan peoples began to migrate westward in sufficient numbers to found empires, such as that in the district now known as Northern Nigeria, in the clash between Islamism and Paganism, not of arms and war only, but of mind and thought, the latter won, and proof of the victory is seen in this inclusion of Pagan rites into Muhammedan ceremonies.

The thirteen known societies of this order may be traced back to one of their number, PENDA-PENDA, an early French Guinea organisation. It may have originally been a branch of MASUBORI or MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH or KONGCORONG, but coming into contact with the Pagan SI'MO (and possibly ORO) its purity of ritual declined, and it became the parent-influence of kindred associations, as shown in the following table.

Pagan Societies. In the history of anything Pagan there must always be hesitation in using dates. Suffice it then to say that when the Muhammedan invasion of the West Coast took place the Pagan societies were well established. They withstood that bitter antagonism, as they did the later one from the Jesuit Fathers (and their predecessors of The Order of Christ) who accompanied the earliest Portu-

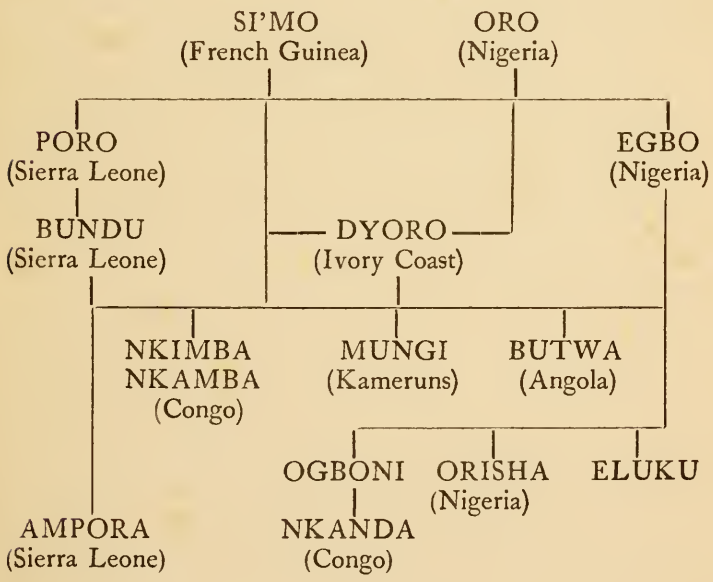
guese adventurers to the coast. Almost contemptuously, they accepted from both spectacular trifles of ceremony and ritual.



They were instituted to enforce and maintain tribal traditions, customs and beliefs that were in danger of changing or becoming obsolete. The organisers were the champions of the old against the new, as some of their descendants still are. They were the restrictors of mental advance and punishers of the heretic and the unorthodox. They were clever enough to know that prohibition alone was not sufficient foundation for any organisation desiring longevity, and, therefore, made their societies the repositories of the folklore, myths and history and the conceptions of art and culture and learning and wisdom the tribes possessed. Moreover, they became the teachers of these things. The only teachers.

Gradually each society became the "Power" of the district within which it functioned. Membership became the best insurance the natives of those districts knew against surrounding dangers. Fear may have been the first motive, but loyalty soon followed. Their life was governed and regulated by the society's tenets, but they themselves were of it, initiated into it, and could become even officials of it. This may be why, when forced to migrate or when sold overseas, they planted the "banner" of their society in the midst of their new homes.

The earliest are of the Law-God organisation, to use a word already coined, and of those known before the seventeenth century the following grouping can be made,



All these great and powerful societies have largely influenced others. They are intertribal. Some have

established successful branches in states other than that of their own headquarters. Some, like Poro of Sierra Leone with Nkimba of the Congo, have likenesses in their secret language, and others have traces of similar rites, as have Si'mo of French Guinea and Butwa of Angola.

Poro had influenced nearly all Sierra Leone with its branches, especially those of Bundu, Ampora, Kufong and Mannekeh, being acknowledged by the Tenne, Mende, Sherbro, Vai, Kafu-Bullom, Koranko, Lokko, Limba and Sanda-Temne peoples, as well as by paganised Fula, Susu and Mandingo settlers.

Egbo by its powerful branches has influenced the Akuna-kuna, Andoni, Awori, Aro, Ebo, Efik, Egba, Egbado, Ede, Ekita, Ekoi, Ibani, Ibo, Ibibio, Geduma, Kukuruku, and other Yoruba and kindred peoples in Nigeria and Dahomey as well as some of the tribes of the Congo countries and the Kameruns.

Dyoro is known and feared and obeyed not only in the Upper Volta, but in the Gold Coast and Dahomey, and through others of its branches right through the Niger Colony to the Upper Congo regions.

Mungi has established branches in Belgian and French Congo, Dahomey, Kameruns, Nigeria, and Butwa links one side of the continent to the other, influencing tribes from Angola to Rhodesia.

GROUPING OF THE PAGAN SOCIETIES

The Mystic and the Religious. This group includes the Law-God Societies, the Priestly associations, and the Prohibition, Protective and Purification societies.

(*a*) Law-God Societies. Ampora, Bundu, Poro, of Sierra Leone ; Butwa of Angola ; Dyoro of Upper Volta ; Egbo, Eluku, Ogboni, Orisha, Oro, of Nigeria ; Mungi of the Kameruns ; Nkamba, Nkanda, Nkimba, of the Congo ; and Si'mo of French Guinea.

(*b*) Priestly Associations. These are brotherhoods after the order of the Hebrew Levites, and include

Ayaka, Ebomici, Eyo, Okonko, Nimm, Nri, of Nigeria; Homowo, Oyeni, of the Gold Coast; and Ikung, Malanda, Nda, Ukukwe, of the Congo.

(*c*) Prohibition Societies. Banban, Dubaia, Gbangbani, Kangar, Kemah, Mannekeh, Sandè, Tuntu, of Sierra Leone; and Mawungu, Ngi, Izyoga, of the Congo.

(*d*) Protective Societies. Bili, Kimpasi, Kongold, Ndembo, of the Congo; Boibente, Kofoo, Kufong, Tilang, Yassi, of Sierra Leone; Dus of Upper Volta; Egugu, Ekkpe, Ekkpo-Njawhaw, Ngbe, Oshorbo, Shopono, of Nigeria; Egungun, Odúwa, Odwira, of the Gold Coast; Elung, Ukuku, of the Kameruns; and Mukanda of the Congo.

(*e*) Purification Societies. Apowa, Humoi, of the Gold Coast; Chibados of Angola; Iban-Isong, Ndito-Iban, Ovia, of Nigeria; Muemba, Mukuku, of the Kameruns; Njembe, of the Congo; and Ramena, Segere, of Sierra Leone.

The Democratic and Patriotic.

(*a*) Agricultural Associations. If the prosperity of West Africa rests upon the attention paid by its peoples to agriculture, as some think, the farmers and other land associations are a hopeful sign. In all the populous districts they are now to be found, and they are being strongly helped by the agricultural colleges established by the various governments. Most of the new associations have memberships drawn from the ranks of young, educated men. Those chosen for description here are, however, of the older type founded on the ideas of the fertility cults. They include Adamu, Olokemeji, of Nigeria; Koliumbo, Raruba, of Sierra Leone; Neguiti of the Congo; and Yugu of the Kameruns.

(*b*) Co-operative Societies. These are not exactly what the title conveys to most Americans or Britons, yet having some likenesses. Varying motives caused their foundation, mostly good, and they remain in the majority of cases great organisations of social and provident importance. They include Agbaia,

Borro-Mia-Gundu, Wanka, of Sierra Leone; Babende, Bena-Riamba, Lubuku, of the Congo; Mborko, of Nigeria; Olongumbu, of Angola; and Zangbeto of Dahomey.

(*c*) Dance, Play and Sports Clubs. Aiyasa, Ankumunko, Baya-Gbunde, Kaloko, Kure, Wundé, of Sierra Leone; Ofiokpo, Owu-Egbo, of Nigeria; and Yasi, of the Congo.

(*d*) Political Societies. Epe, Idiong, of Nigeria; Joosai, Kinki, of Sierra Leone, and Owo of Nigeria.

(*e*) Social Organisations. Andomba, Ankoi, Kono, Tormai, of Sierra Leone; Bweti, of the Congo; and Ebere, Ekene, Eturi, Gelede, Ovato, Ovra, of Nigeria.

(*f*) Trade Guilds. There are numerous guilds of fishermen, hunters, copper and iron workers, wood-carvers, musicians, and traders. Those of the blacksmiths are probably the oldest. In many tribes these workers form a separate clan or sept, ranking as members of chiefs' families, honoured as leading citizens and, in some districts, are exempt from the payment of taxes. The associations are well organised and exclusive, having passwords and signs and secret languages, and in some instances entrance and grade fees. They include Bakelebroa, of the Congo; Kambonbonke, of Sierra Leone; and Miwetyi, of the Congo.

(*g*) War Clubs. Abam, Eku-Meku, of Nigeria; and Ekongola, of the Kameruns.

Subversive and Criminal. Most of the criminal associations are "animal" societies. The titles are often known to Europeans as "Human Baboon" or "Human Leopard." They include Alligator, Baboon, Boa, Leopard, Panther societies and the Tongo Players of Sierra Leone.

All the above divisions are merely attempts at grouping. Most of the societies have more than one reason for existence. Some seem to include in their work every one of the subjects detailed above.

CHAPTER II

ORGANISATION

Headquarters—Houses for Initiates—Chapels—Membership—Membership Grades—Membership Fees.

HEADQUARTERS

Many of the societies possess property in buildings, council halls, men's houses and women's houses, and chapels and other shrines.

Detail of mural decoration in the Ogboni House of Abeokuta.

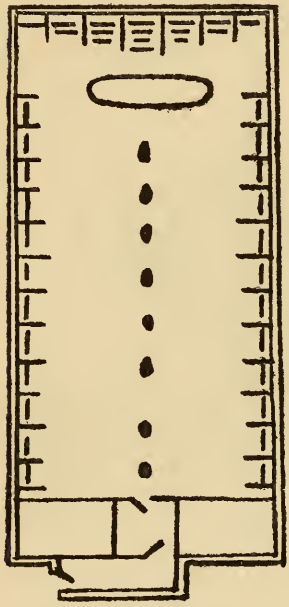
The council house is used as the permanent headquarters of the owning society, as is the "Ogboni House" in Abeokuta and the "Egbo House" in Lagos.

The members of the council act as trustees for such property, control its use, and keep it in repair. There

may be a similar building, but on a smaller scale, in some or all of the villages influenced by the society.

The society or council house is the meeting-place of councillors, of officials and higher grade members, who use it in the same way that Europeans do their clubs. Or they may be reserved for and by the councillors, or by the Head himself. There are some instances of their being used for housing young initiates. During the times of the celebrations they are generally thrown open to all the members.

Most of them are well built and of fair proportions, but they may be, as are those of YASSI, ordinary village houses distinguished by the society sign. Of those that may be termed "halls," those owned by EGBO and BUTWA are the most conspicuous. That of the first in Lagos is a large oblong building "like the nave of a cathedral." Its clay walls are "elaborately painted inside and have a relief of clay figures and wooden images behind the seats." It has stood for many years. The *Mulumbi* of BUTWA is an oblong building of good material and workmanship, boasted of as being large enough to "contain the entire village population." The entrance is on the east side, but being L-shaped actually faces north. It contains three doors or barricades that must be passed before the hall itself is entered. At the same end are two rooms "reserved for the officials, and that have, as far as eye can tell, no way into them." Inside the hall are seats against the



Butwa Society House.

north and south walls for the twenty-four councillors, and at the west end the "throne" for the Head and on either side of it three seats for the officials.

In front of these is a guarded oval space, where stand the sacred possessions. The roof, a light thatch, is supported by tree-stem posts some fifteen or sixteen feet high. The walls are of clay, outside roughly made but within smoothed with some care, and bearing cryptic signs amidst the decorative work, cleverly done in various colours.

The *ijebu* or OGBONI houses are vested in the trusteeship of certain families long associated with the society.

Where there is no central building the houses of the councillors may be used for society purposes, as in EGUNGUN, whose *Alagba* set aside a room of their homes or build a special booth in their compounds for the use of the members, or of a particular grade. Such rendezvous increase the social power of the societies greatly, becoming centres from whence "in the intervals of the society's business, local news is disseminated and dances organised."

Each grade may possess a headquarters of its own, either a house in a village or a hired room in a town.

The "temples" of the Muhammedan societies are generally rooms in hired houses. Those of MASUBORI are called "Houses of Kuri" (the *bori* or spirit there worshipped), and are described as of fairly large proportions, furnished with articles of clothing and other things said to be worn or used by the *bori*, and containing the drums and flags used in the processions, quantities of food suitable to the appetites of spirits, and a large collecting box for the alms of the faithful. A portion of the room is curtained off into a Holy of Holies for the rest and retirement of the other-world patron, into which, of mortals only, the *Arifa* in charge may enter.

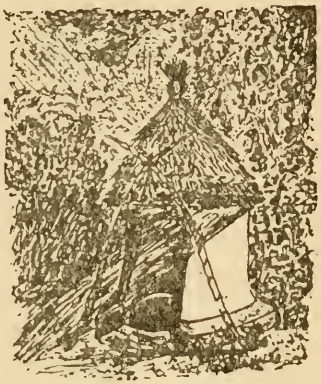
HOUSES FOR INITIATES

The men's houses and women's houses may be permanent structures in or near a village, or temporary erections forming part of the sacred enclosure in the bush. PORO and KONGCORONG own some of the first kind, known as "medicine houses" and "goat houses." These are the places in which happen, according to some writers, the gargantuan feasts and the Rabelaisian scenes attributed to these societies. "Such houses are generally old, the timbers black with age and smoke, the heap of ashes outside being as high as ten or twelve feet. There is a stout fence of the zareba kind or of living trees (that were planted as stakes) surrounding the place, with a gate contrived in the midst. No other building exists in the enclosure, which is placed outside the village."

In these houses lately initiated members spend periods of tuition, either immediately after leaving the bush or when desirous of taking up higher grades. The life is generally that known as communal, and is akin to that known amongst the peoples of the Melanesian area, the Torres Straits islands, Borneo, the East Indian and Philippine archipelagoes, Hindustan and Chino-India, and various regions of North America. There are time-honoured laws and regulations. The juniors fag for the seniors, collecting wood and other fuel, tending the fire, and keeping the place clean. The fire-tenders consider it a great honour to keep alive the flame first lit by the Head of their society. Sometimes there are separate rooms for meals. No uninitiated person ever gains admission. The houses are never left empty. Someone is always on guard. One rule for the preservation of the continual presence of the guards is that certain stones within the entrance-way must be kept moist, this being accomplished by using them as a latrine.

CHAPELS

Beyond the buildings described, most of the societies own "chapels." These may be merely tiny thatches raised a few inches from the ground, and containing fetish objects and the offerings of the members, or huts built by the roadside near villages, or within them, large enough to contain an erected "altar" and the presence of the devotee. In Bundu they are known as "paint houses" and in Ramena as *romari*. Those of Yassi are known bytheir paint-splashed walls, and those of Poro have wide-open entrances and outer walls whitewashed. The little space within contains a fetish altar.



Poro "chapel."

Temporary headquarters for the purposes of retreats and schools are erected from time to time by many of the societies, and these are discussed in the chapter on Festivals.

MEMBERSHIP

The original societies were exclusively male in membership. This applies to Pagan and Muhammedan alike.

The first of the women's societies was Bundu of Sierra Leone, and the original members were of the Temne tribe. Nkamba of the Congo followed. Nimm, of Nigeria, is probably the earliest of mixed membership.

To the student of African anthropology there is

nothing strange in the early rise of the women's and the mixed-membership organisations. Although appearing as a drudge only in most pictures drawn of the land, the African women have long been responsible for most of the social life of the villages. In political life also they are not infrequently the "power behind the throne," and are often to be found upon it. One name only need be mentioned as an illustration, that of Nya-Katolo of Angola, Queen of the Ba-Kuena, who trained her own well-paid army, conquered all the countries between the Luena River and the Kavungu, defeated all opposing powers, including Matiamvo the local male Napoleon, and established many flourishing villages, all of which were ruled by women. In commercial life they also hold their own, and in that of religion they have supplied their share of Oracles and Priestesses since the time of Tanit, the Punic mystery of Carthage.

Most of the exclusively male or exclusively female societies admit their members at the age of puberty, and initiate during a specially held "school." The exceptions are, children dedicated to membership from birth, and admission at any age. Where this last rule is found the junior members often form a separate lodge of non-secret character.

It is the general rule to exclude cripples, the mentally deficient and the physically deformed. Those considered illegitimate are denied admission by some societies.

In those which are Pagan the dead retain their membership; indefinitely in some instances, and in others for a term of years, as in Poro, which "names" a member for the first seven years after decease. If a "councillor," the seat he formerly occupied is left vacant. There are several instances of past councillors and higher-grade members being "called" at the opening of the annual celebration. An

Ekongola official shouts such names three times. Egungun appoints a guide to bring these spiritual members to the assembly. Oro makes no decision until their opinions have been asked, and, by methods only known to the officials, their votes registered.

Honorary members may be admitted. Those chosen for such distinction are Africans holding high rank in other societies and resident Europeans who are interested in local customs. Egbo and Poro both have a long list of names on their honorary rolls of civil and military officers who have served in Nigeria and Sierra Leone; that of the last mentioned containing the names of some of the officials who have governed the colony. Such members have an investiture rather than an initiation. It is ceremonious and spectacular, but in no wise a divulgence of the society's secrets.

MEMBERSHIP GRADES

The members are graded from probationer to councillor, above which there is only the Head. Egbo, Ogboni, Okonko, and Poro have each ten grades or degrees, and other societies have six or seven.

The junior grades, like the first two of Poro, are not often secret ones, although they may have their own particular signs and passwords. They are the novice grades. Their members salute those of senior rank ; those of Egbo by pretending to be lame, those of Poro with a thrice-repeated bow, and those of Nkimba by touching the temples three times.

Senior members of Okonko sound out a note on a horn to clear from their path all those of lesser degree.

The members of the highest grades, especially that of council rank, form a Negro aristocracy that,

like that of marabout, is both envied, admired and feared. To gain a place in those grades is the ambition of tens of thousands of West Africans.

The substantial grades may be complete organisations in themselves, acting without reference to the society as a whole, and having their own passwords and signs and ritual and secrets and even speech. This explains why IDIONG, for instance, is self-controlled and yet an integral part of EGBO; and why only the member who has reached the highest degree knows all the secrets of his society. In some cases, as in AMPORA, EGUNGUN, ORISHA and others, the grade-society has lost all links with the parent-society save in its use of a kindred ritual.

The title of the grade may be that of an official of the society, that official ruling over the grade, as the *Wuja* of PORO rules the *Wujanga* grade, or the grades may bear names unique to themselves and not that of their titular leader.

Some grades have importance other than that given by their place in the seniority of the society; thus the *Ndibu* grade of EGBO, although not the chief one, is called the "mother" degree, and the official who controls it always acts as the *Idem* or Deputy Head of the society. The chief of the *Awzaw* grade of OKONKO is also given the like honour.

For purposes of promotion two, or more, grades may be considered as one, the taking of one being automatically followed by the bestowal of the others, as is done in EGBO (*Eturi* and *Nkanda* grades), and in OKONKO (*Aja-Ama*, *Ife-Ii-Awku*, and *Amawanlu* grades).

Promotion from grade to grade is usually a matter of age and seniority, but in some cases it is by selection and in others the honour can be purchased.

In some of the male-membership societies the chief wife of a man who has attained high rank

shares the honour of wearing the insignia of that rank; the chosen wife of an Okonko member, for instance, adding a cord about her ankle (the opposite one to that adorned by the man) for every one her husband wears. Also she may adopt a new name corresponding to the one, or more than one, assumed by him on entering the higher grade.

The following particulars of the ten grades of Okonko may be taken as typical of the societies in which promotion is purchased, and as illustrating most of the progressive dignities offered by the others.

First Grade. *Amanwulu*, the probationer's degree. The sign is one corded string, of special texture and plaiting, fastened about the waist and another about the ankle. The first is only worn at ceremonials. A staff of carved osaga or okeakpa wood is carried. This is the initiation grade, and all the members are youths.

Second Grade. *Chi*, the grade of the "spiritual men" (the men who can talk with after-death spirits). The sign is an iron staff about five feet in length and ornamented with a three-inch brass band near the top, and a small ivory horn through blasts on which a man of this grade may proclaim his presence and importance. This is the first grade that gives the member the privilege of bearing a new name.

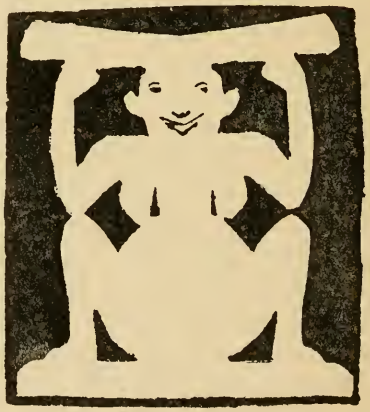
Third Grade. *Aja-Ama*.

Fourth Grade. *Ife-Ii-Awku*.

Fifth Grade. *Amawanlu*. These three grades are taken together, and there seems little importance attached to them save in their being steps to higher ranks. They are the "two-stringed" "three-stringed" and "four-stringed" men, the additional strings worn being similar in material and workmanship to the first. The signs and ritual of the three appear to be interchangeable.

Sixth Grade. *Ajalija*, the first of the major grades. The rise to it is a matter of selection as well as ability to pay. If the promotion ceremony includes the sacrifice of a cow the new member of this grade is saluted as *Obu-Efi*, He who has slain a sacred cow. This sacrifice is a rare one, most of the donated beasts being branded and turned out to graze as the possessions of the society. The sign of the grade is an iron staff nine feet long, forked at the top and spear-pointed below, with brass bands at the two ends and at the centre. They used to wear four-inch wide copper anklets, but these are not now often seen. The small ivory horn of the minor grades is exchanged for one of larger size, and a goat-skin bag now makes an additional ornament. The *Ajalija* have the right to be buried in a coffin within the precincts of the council house, and to have a cow sacrificed at the funeral. They are entitled to sit on a stool, a right generally reserved for tribal chiefs. Most of these stools are ancient, and are jealously guarded by the owners, at whose death they revert to the possession of the society. The stools are carried by attendants, and

Okonko Stool.



"Ajalija" Stool of Okonko.

are always placed upon a spread goat-skin. If the stool is not available the goat-skin must be, as the *Ajalija* are not allowed to sit upon bare earth. Three attendants (formerly domestic slaves) follow each man of this order; three new names are adopted at election, three prostrations are made before them. Sons whose fathers held this grade are given priority of election.

"In the great majority of cases men are content when they have reached this order, and but few make any attempt to advance further. They have reached quite an honourable position in the community and are influential citizens."

Seventh Grade. *Ekwu.* Like the three last of the minor grades this one seems but a preliminary to those that follow, those of *Awzaw.*

Eighth Grade. *Awzaw-Unaw*, the *Awzaw* of the House, and the

Ninth Grade. *Awzaw-Nukwu*, Great *Awzaw* or *Awzaw* of the People, are taken together. In the ceremony of promotion to the last a horse is sacrificed, and the *Awzaw-Nukwu* thereby gains the additional courtesy title of *Otibwu-Anyinya*, The One who has Slain a Horse. In a tsetse country this is not an easy law to fulfil, but "the condition of the poor brute matters not as long as it is not actually dead. The new *Awzaw* must let out whatever blood it has. Sometimes the animals are in such a decrepit condition that they have to be carried to the place of sacrifice." There are special purifications in the ceremonies for this rank, most being performed at night. After the candidate has been "purified to office" he must not be seen in public for two months. He may not sleep at home, neither may his feet come under any roof-tree. He is accommodated in a friend's compound, in a small new booth. Should it rain, he may sit under his friend's eaves "but his feet must remain outside." He is daily

smeared from head to foot with chalk. He may see no one not of *Awzaw* rank. His food may be brought by his chief wife, but he may only speak to her from within his booth and through the medium of his eldest son.

On the day his two months' seclusion is ended, a day of great rejoicing in the village, he parades the streets preceded by an attendant bearing the *ogenne*, the *Awzaw* bell. The deep-toned clanging heralds his approach. On reaching the market-place or the chief's house, or the house where resides the Head of the society, he embraces his fellow gradesmen, greets his eldest son, is proclaimed, and adorned with the insignia of his new rank. These consist of an iron-shafted spear with a crown-like, twisted-metal ornament at the foot of the blade and around the centre, and with brass bands at intervals down the shaft; a large elephant-tusk horn requiring two men for the carrying, a special stool of a pattern restricted to his grade, and ankle-cords dyed red with *ufie*, camwood. He binds similar cords round the ankle of his chief wife.

Okonko Staves.

"The peculiar benefits that accrue to members of this order are: absolute exemption from all forms of manual labour; immunity from bodily assault from any native whether of his own or any other town; the right to inflict punishment on any offender against himself or household; the right to sit on the council which exercises jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases in his town, and which regulates customs and promulgates laws." Formerly he was forbidden to cross water, but modern life in Iboland has made this law a dead letter. If he is convicted of any offence, such as theft, he is deprived of his

title and expelled from his grade. Should necessity arise for his arrest, he must not be bound or tied in any way. His rank is considered sufficient guarantee that when told to attend any inquiry he will do so.

When promoted the new *Awzaw-Nukwu* usually bestows upon himself four additional names, and grants a like honour to his chief wife.

The holders of this grade are in nearly every case sons whose fathers formerly held the rank, but they cannot be elected during their father's lifetime.

The Head of the grade, the *Okpala*, is also Head of the society. He ranks as a High Priest in the district where he lives. This office is hereditary. When the holder is a minor the senior *Nukwu-Awzaw* acts as his Deputy in cases arising from confessions of adultery, or from offences committed against fellow gradesmen. All other judgments are the combined effort of the Okonko council, spoken through the voice of the young *Okpala*.

The grade has its own secret language, and uses special drum-notes, made either on the *ekwe*, or great drum of the society, or on smaller editions of the same instrument, and only understood by its members. Also, and this is what no other grade of any other society is known to share, it has its own currency. This "money" is described as "tiny" pieces of iron resembling small squashed tin-tacks, half an inch in length, with arrow-shaped heads and the stems the thickness of a large pin. They are known as *umumu*, and are disbursed by the grade as thank-offerings at purifications, also exchanged for payments in kind by the pilgrims who desire the help of the Okonko Oracle. They are greatly valued by the ordinary people of the district, who wrap them in leaves and bury them near a member's grave, or at the threshold of the house of an official,

as a propitiation to the guardian deities of the society.

Tenth Grade. *Fu* or *Pu* or *Aji-Chi*. This highest grade is very exclusive. "Not more than half a dozen members have ever been known at any particular period of the society's history." Those who attain to it form the inner council or executive of the society. The salutation is *obuzulu*, a word conveying the idea that all killings are now at an end. The holders of the office are dreaded as "men who have power to slay or keep alive." They are the "Hidden Men." They function from the darkness.

"Each grade gives the member a certain function in carrying out the society's law, and experience of some new phase of it, some advance in it, some higher power, that may be a higher morality, and thus step by step they (the members) reach its climax and completeness."

"Finally, when he has passed through all the grades, which few do, when he has finally sworn the greatest oath of all, when he knows all the society's heart's secrets—and that can be summed up in the sentence: I am what I am through my knowledge of law and order and justice and morality —then, and not till then, he is an *Elder*, a man revered, honoured, and obeyed."

MEMBERSHIP FEES

All the societies charge fees. These are of varying amounts and paid in all sorts of currency. There are entrance fees, promotion payments, food charges, tips to officials and largesse to members, money for feasts, cash paid at the beginning and ending of the periods of seclusion, and the professional fees paid to the operators at such rites as circumcision and excision.

As examples of those societies considered expensive, Egbo, Idiong and Okonko may be cited.

Egbo charges £30 to £50 for the rank of *Ndibu*, £50 to £80 for that of *Eturi*, and £80 to £100 for that of *Nkanda*, besides initiation fees and official "presents." It has been estimated that to reach its highest grade an expenditure of more than £700 is demanded.

Idiong, a highly exclusive society of "aristocrats," although its nominal charges are only £20 for its probationary grade and £75 for full membership, appeals only to the very rich because of the necessary expensive entertainments at election and promotion. At these the population of a whole district is often feasted, and during the feasts "money is scattered like rain" upon the guests.

Okonko charges are as follows: First Grade. £10 in cash or kind, goats forming the usual medium. Second. £20. Third to Fifth. £25 each. Sixth. £50 to £90 in fees, or £10 bounty given to each member of the grade, over and above the donation of a cow, or cows, to the officials. Seventh. £15 to each councillor and official. Eighth and Ninth. £90 in cash and donations of goats and cows to the officials. In addition there is the expense of a feast to many hundreds of people, that may last several days, the charges of professional drummers and dancers, and the expensive tipping on the day of election. There is also the cost of the horse for the sacrifice. Tenth. "Although the grade is a cheap one (the nominal fee is £130) there follows election a festival lasting from a week to a month, according to the means of the new *Aji-Chi*."

The less up-to-date societies, including Bweti, Ekkpe, Jamboi, Malanda, Naferi, Njembe, Ofiokpo, Ovra, Owu-ogbo, Ramena, Sembe, Tilang, and Yugu, still accept payment in Molucca white or Zanzibar grey cowries.

Bori demands a new house for the tutor, money and grass mats for the members of the council, and

for the officials a new large jar, one red cock, one black hen, a pair of white fowls, an all-white or all-black ram or he-goat, and one white and one black country-cloth.

Bundu payments include a bushel of clean rice, a fowl, a gallon of palm-oil, a new handkerchief, and a bottle of rum. For the betrothed girls who are initiated there are extra "bush" charges of rice and fowls, dried fish and one cane of salt (*kasankra*).

Butwa fees are paid in beer and calico, hoes and beads as well as cash.

Ekongola charges for initiation goods to the value of ten shillings for the Head, and donations of food to all the council members and the officials.

Ndembo charges one fowl at the beginning and one hundred strings of blue pipe beads at the termination of the puberty school, and fowls and goats at each promotion.

Nkimba and Nkamba demand two dollars' worth of cloth and two fowls from the candidates for their tutors, five strings of blue pipe beads as a "farewell dash" to the same officials, food in kind or money to pay for same for the councillors, and a pair of goats for the Head.

Poro payments include eight leaves of tobacco at the outer gate of the sacred enclosure, twelve at the next, sixteen at the third, and twenty-four at the last and innermost barrier. There are also gifts of rice, fowls, and goats to the officials. Of late years this society has demanded cash fees in addition to some of the payments in kind, and the amount charged is increasing in amount.

Anvils are included in some of the payments, that of Bili being two anvils, from ten to fifteen fowls, from two to six spears, a piece of bark cloth and a pot of palm-oil; the last two being multiplied by the number of the officials taking part in the initiation.

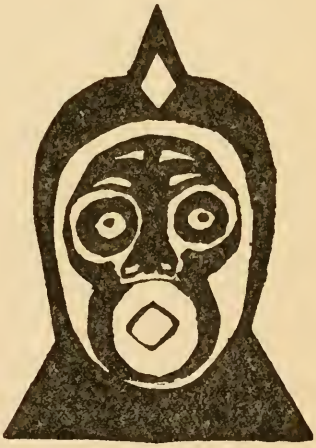
CHAPTER III

MINOR OFFICIALS

Variety of Appointments—Official Dress—Champions—Executioners—Law Officers—Messengers—Magicians—Astrologers—Diviners.

VARIETY OF APPOINTMENTS

The infinite variety and number of the officials in most of the societies is bewildering; yet it must be remembered that the African is not singular in his ability to multiply office. Even such a list of officials as that known to EKKPE can be more than rivalled by that of the American Ku Kluk Klan and by similar associations in Europe. Their queer titles and queerer duties may be also rivalled outside Africa, as may be remembered from what Sir Walter Scott in *Waverley* calls the "tail" of a Scottish gentleman. "There is," said Evan Dhu, "his hanchman, or right-hand man; then his bardh, or poet; then his bladier, or orator, to make harangues to the great folk whom he visits; then his gilly-more, or armour-bearer, to carry his sword and target, and his gun; then his gilly-casfliuch, who



Ekkpe Mask.

carries him on his back through the sikes and brooks; then his gilly-trush-harnish, to carry his knapsack; then his gilly-constrain, to lead his horse by the bridle in steep and difficult paths; and the piper and piper's man, and it may be a dozen young lads besides, that have no business, but are just boys of the belt, to follow the laird, and to do his honour's bidding."

The society officials include the following: Ambassador, Arbitrator, Caterer, Champion, Chief of the Spirits, Chief of the Youths, Conservator of Legends, Dancer, Doctor, Drummer, Executioner, Fag, Guardian, Heiress, Helper, Herald, Horn-blower, Jailor, Judge, Lawyer, Linguist, Magician, Marshal, Medicine Man, Messenger, Mistress of the Novices, Moderator, Mother of the Fatting House, Mother of the Kingly Man or Kingly Mother, Mother of the Spirits, Musician, Player, Poet Laureate, Policeman, Priest, Priestess, Princess, Revenger, Rubber, Shaver, Treasurer, Tutor, Undertaker, Water Carrier, and Wizard.

The officials, with or without the councillors, form a close corporation amongst themselves of great power in the tribe and district. They are also found banded for social amenities into clubs from which all others are excluded, as are the officers of Ogboni and the *Tasso* Deputies of Poro. During the times of celebrations and retreats, when communal life is the order of the day for the others, the officials eat and sleep secluded from all those holding lesser degress.

OFFICIAL DRESS

Visitors to some of the West Coast towns, especially the ports, may have seen bands of curiously dressed natives exhibiting themselves as the officials of the local secret society. Their performance invariably leads to a collection being taken up on their

behalf. For several generations a family in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, has enriched its succeeding members by this play-acting. Sometimes they declare themselves to be Poro officials and sometimes those of Bundu, and they have even been known to pretend to the rank and office of *Egungun*, an official of Egbo, and his satellites. But no real official would ever appear, or think of appearing, in this guise and after this manner. They are not of the parish-beadle class who take, and make, opportunities of parading official plumage for whatever kudos may ensue. Their office is to them a dignity and an honour, and as such is preserved and guarded from the gaze of the merely curious. Only during the celebrations are the officers masked and costumed, and found carrying symbols that manifest their calling, such as swords, shields, spears, axes, whips, bladders, megaphones, and sandals. These properties, like the masks, are often as ancient as the societies to which they belong.

Egungun Mask.

The *Woodya* of Bundu wears a mask made from the husk of a cocoanut, the fibre left on save where a miniature face is carved and painted. An official of Tormai wears one of similar material, but the husk is scraped and painted red save for the flat, white face portion. The ears are large and pointed, and a single horn is mounted above. The *Lakka* of Ampora wears a great cane head-dress supported on his shoulders and crowned with upstanding

feathers. The *Ambassador* of the same society wears a mask of carved and painted wood, the markings reminiscent of those of a Red Indian warrior, with the mouth protruded into megaphone shape. IZYOGA and UKUKU each have officials in masks supposed to picture the sense of "hearing," the ears being the most pronounced feature. Masks suitable to the office of Executioner, carved to represent "Death," are found in KONGOLD and other societies, and many portraying the emotions of pain, joy, sorrow, justice, mercy, and vengeance may be found. The NDEMBO one for "Pain" being particularly graphic. In construction they take many forms, e.g., a face shaped like the masks known to English bonfire boys or a complete head and shoulders. These may be left plain or painted in startling colours, or covered with bead-work or metal. A PORO mask, seen in 1921, was of beaten brass, the features of the face being distinctly ancient Egyptian. They may be crowned with feathers or verdure, this last being sometimes piled to the height of several feet, and the material ranging from a single branch or a few blossoms to a big bush of massed foliage. One made with more attention to design than some of the others is worn by the MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH *Messenger*. It is

Tormai Mask.

Ndembo "Pain" Mask.

of basket-work, hive-shaped, with a tray-like arrangement mounted above on two sticks, upon which are blossoms, and from which descend ribbon-like streamers. This may be worn above an enshrouding fibre petticoat or above a body nude save for a girdle and armlets and anklets of reed and flowers. The skill with which many of them have been made is undeniable. The ancient ones of hard woods, some of the woods being foreign to Africa, if weirdly fashioned and painted yet forcefully declare the intentions of the carvers. OKONKO has some made from the friable *aron* and *ebwu* woods, and one of these, the work of a modern artist, is as curious as it is unexpected. It represents the upturned, spectacled face of a white man, the hair being grey fur closely fitting the skull, and the very full neck bearing a conventual pattern carved in relief. It is worn above a gown of white cord. The frequency of white faces in these masks has been noticed and commented upon by many travellers, as also have been the recurrence of European features; the long, straight, narrow nose, the small, thin-lipped mouth, and the shapely, regular and tiny teeth. On

Mahammah-Jamboh Mask.

Okonko Mask.

the other hand, some of the most ancient masks bear carved features that resemble those seen in early Egyptian sculpture, and others have all the grotesque hideousness of the faces recently unearthed from amidst the ruins of Carthage.

Champions. An official of this title may be the "Orator" of the society, announcing events, promulgating decrees, and interpreting dance actions. The *Wuja* of Poro raises a voice that "equals more than that of fifty men," and that would give him pride of place amongst the Town Criers of the Homeland. The two of the Tongo-Players look as important and speak as boastfully as their names "Big Thing" and "Great Thing" suggest.

All dress the part, wearing menacing masks and carrying formidable weapons; the Poro official just mentioned also making his body hideous with splashes of bright paint, as do the officials of Yassi. Bori gives its Champion an Assistant, both carrying gigantic clubs. Yassi, a society of women members, has a Champion, called the *Kambeh Mama*, who imitates the men in carrying spear and shield.

Executioners. Officials called Executioners are found in Egungun, Ekkpe, Kinki, Naferi, Ukuku, Ogboni, and Yugu. They do police and sentry work in and about the society houses and the sacred enclosures. The position is now merely a picturesque reminder of the past, for the laws of white masters have robbed this office of its former "glory." Indeed, it is difficult to determine how they continue to maintain the credit of the position, but that they are still feared there is no doubt. They bear weapons, spears and staves and swords and axes; that carried by a kindred official of Poro being a double axe like those borne by the lictors of the Roman

Poro Axe.

republic. He of EGUNGUN also has an axe, carried for him by *Jenju*, his chief assistant. (This man, the chief of the *Alagba*, acts as the Deputy Head of his society, and is never seen without a following platoon of servants.)

Occasionally the Executioner is clothed in white raiment, or appears with his body whitened, as a reminder not only that he was once a "ghost-maker" but also that he was in a continuous state of repentance and contrition for the results of his fatal work. It is said that they voluntarily underwent some bodily discipline, such as fasting or keeping their feet off the ground for some hours, or wearing the blood-stained garment of the victim, to "appease" the spirits of those they had dispatched in the course of duty. The *Awaijale* of OGBONI is known as "He who shows mercy in death."

LAW OFFICERS. There are quite a number of officials set aside for the interpretation of the "laws" of the societies, known variously as arbitrators, jailors, judges, lawyers, marshals, moderators, policemen, and revengers. Sometimes two of these "law" officers act as counsel for the plaintiff (candidate) and for the defendant (society) at initiations. In AMPORA the question of admission or non-admission is heard by the Moderator. BOVIOWAH provides something like a session of the ancient German Fehmic Court, with a triple summons by the judges to the novice, and a prolonged argument, that may last more than one day, as to his suitability as a candidate. The OGBONI Arbitrator, the *Alakatu*, himself makes both speeches, let us hope with equal impartiality. The Judge of EKKPE, the *Ogbogrualabo*, also does this, but, prompted with particulars by his assistants, the *Oyemabinalabo* (Jailor or Guardian) and the *Osi* or Policeman. BUNDU employs two of its chief grade women, *Digba* and *Diba*, in this legal work.

Messengers. The Messenger, sometimes known as the Ambassador or the Herald, is the most important official other than the Head and his Deputy. He is possessed of a multitude of duties, and can be reckoned, like the Abyssinian *affa-negus*, the "breath" or vitality of the society in ceremony and celebration. He is usually the custos of the ritual properties, and may be found as the actual caretaker of the Society House. As the time draws near for the festival and retreat he chooses the place in the bush for the sacred enclosure, superintends its clearing and the erection of the retreat huts, warns graduates of their duties, and novices to be ready, arranges with chief and parent the hundred-and-one small details consequent upon the absence (sometimes for a protracted period) from home of the candidates, and gives his guarantee that—no matter what rumour will assert—no harm will come to any of the boys and girls who accompany him into the bush. During the retreat he is more often than not the master of the ceremonies, appointing guardians and tutors, overlooking the provision of food, and acting as a combined brigade-major, adjutant, and aide-de-camp. At its close he sees to the clearing away of the ceremonial buildings, and the disposal of the site according to the law of never-to-be-broken immemorial custom.

Of their public appearance the following pictures, although ancient, are worth quoting. The Kongcorong Messenger "made his appearance in the afternoon, covered from head to foot with small boughs of trees, and gave notice to the girls that he would pay them a visit after sunset. At the appointed time he entered the village, preceded by drums, and repaired to the assembly place, where all were collected to meet him, coming with music and singing. He commenced by saying that he came to caution the ladies to be very circumspect in their

conduct towards the whites" (meaning the men of Gray and Dochard's expedition), "and related some circumstances, with which he said he was acquainted, little to their credit, and threatened any lady who heeded him not with the usual punishment, that of flogging. All he said was repeated by the girls in a sort of sing-song, accompanied by the drum-music and clapping of hands. Every one made him a present." The next describes the MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH Messenger. "We observed hanging on a stake, outside the walls of the town, a dress composed of the bark of a tree torn into small shreds and formed so as to cover the whole body of the person wearing it . . . this hanging dress, left there a matter of twenty-four hours or so, is a warning of his coming. . . . There was a great shrieking and howling in the woods near by, and presently he appeared, about sunset, accompanied by other officials of this *Mumbo Jumbo* affair. All the inhabitants were drawn up to meet him, and the music and dancing and singing continued for some hours. The man wearing the bark dress appeared to have great authority over the people, and his appearance was a sort of official opening of the retreat life about to be undergone by some novices."

Not all make so noisy an appearance. The BUNDU Messenger creeps into the village like a drifting shadow, and acts as if dumb, pointing with a small bunch of twigs, her official wand of office, to what she desires, and silently indicating by a touch the novices who are to follow her to the edge of the bush. The PORO Messenger manages to be even more original, for he communicates all his commands by playing a flute. If those commands are anything like his tunes, they are of mournful import.

EKKPE entitles its Messenger "The Singer," OYENI calls him "The Linguist," and in BORI he is known as *Dan Maiaba*, the Little Flatterer.

Magicians. The magicians or wizards often come from special families long connected with the craft, in which from father to son, or from mother to daughter, the secrets are handed down. Magic is older than religion, it is as old as the world, and its African exponents keep inviolate secrets that date back to creational times. It is believed that famous magicians of olden days live again in actual reincarnation in some of the present society wizards.

To practise magic for a society is not alone a birthright; it must be secured and placed beyond question of termination by long training and continuous success. From his or her adolescence, to manhood and womanhood, and on to death, the magician knows the fatigue of close application to his or her calling. There are no holidays from it, and one failure ends all.

Most of the societies have magicians amongst their officials, those Pagan being as clever as those Muhammedan, although without apparent connection with the Moor and Egyptian conjurers. It was those of a Pagan society, Poro, who in 1827, at the coronation ceremonials of King George the Second of Bullom, raised a breeze on a calm day strong enough to sway the branches of trees and to scatter the blossoms piled on the altar before the king; and who did it without any of the stage effects necessary to, say, a Maskelyne of London.

They take from their satchel or from the bosom of their robe a bit of wood roughly carved to represent the body of a bird or animal. They fix to this a feather or so for wings, some sticks for legs and bits of creeper for a tail. They put it down on the ground, turn their back, call it, and it follows as if alive, feathers rising and falling, absurd tail wagging, and more absurd legs shuffling through the dust.

A Sembe man takes a small duiker horn loaded

with "medicine," puts it upright in the ground, covers it with a grass basket or a calabash, mutters an incantation, and the basket or bowl rises, sways, swings clear of the ground, and finally falls over, leaving exposed the still standing, still immovable, horn.

A man of Ampora puts water into a "bottle" calabash, scoops a shallow hole in the earth, balances within this the vessel at an angle, utters a word of command, and the vessel turns about, dips its neck, recovers, dips again, allowing the water to fall, drop by drop, according to the wishes of the magician or his audience. This trick is also known to Bori and to Idiong, the last-named balancing the vessel on the smoothly rounded top of a stick planted in the sand.

An Andomba man dips his hand into a bowl of *eleusine* grains, draws it forth with many of the grains sticking to his skin, moves his hand in the air, and the grains run into a little heap in his palm. Then, slowly or quickly according to the utterance of his incantation, they move again, running up the spread fingers and thumb and clinging, some ringing the fingers, some in the form of a bracelet around the wrist, and some in a pattern on the palm. Again he speaks and again they move back to heap themselves together. He will empty these back into the bowl, dip his hand again, and renew the trick with other grains.

A Mungi official plants a hoe in the ground. It is the ordinary agricultural implement bought at the nearest store. It is thrust into the ground by the blade. A villager is ordered to pluck it out. He tries, and fails. He tries to pull it up, to draw it to him, to push it away from him; tries until he sweats with exertion and fear, and has to acknowledge defeat. The official orders others to come to the man's assistance. They obey; but all their

united strength is of no avail. The hoe remains immovable. But now another strange thing happens. The men find they cannot take their hands away from the "bewitched" thing. They are held prisoner. And they remain so until the official, with a touch of his baton or a pass or two of his hand, releases them. Then, with one hand, and with the least possible exertion of strength, he plucks the hoe from the ground.

A Dubaia man breaks a twig from a dracæna tree and holds it up in his fingers. Its leaves remain erect. He lays it on his palm, and the leaves fold about the stem. Again and again he will do this, and at each movement the leaves fold and unfold, droop and stand straight. This trick is well known and frequently performed by magicians of other societies.

The Eturi man pours into his mouth a little water from a calabash that all the spectators have seen filled, and then spurts it out with ten or twelve living swamp fish, each two to three inches in length. A Nkimba man rubs his nose and from it proceeds a stream of ants, a shining red procession that seems to the amazed onlookers endless and altogether supernatural.

A Dou man, well known in his district, swallows a wide-bladed trade machette, and a Belli-Paaro man is noted for his appetite for spears. Others go through the like performance with bamboo rods or the walking-sticks of the spectators. A man of Penda-Penda has quite a "national" reputation in French Guinea for swallowing snakes of the poisonous species. An Ayaka man passes through his body an ordinary staff, as it is reported Simon Magus did, as though either wood or body was nothing but vapour. It is an aged but ever-fresh illusion, and requires considerable powers of sleight of hand to make it successful.

A Bundu woman plays tricks with crocodiles. A strong and fearless swimmer, she dives amidst the reptiles and stirs them from sleep, calling to them as she flirts the water into their eyes, and making them follow her as she swims rapidly away down the Bunce Creek. Or she will stand on the bank, ruffle the water with the sole of her foot, and out from the mud will come one of the beasts, to be fed by her, and at her signal retire again to the stream. It is claimed that this woman can enter the water nude and with hair in disarray, swim for some time beneath the surface, and return with her hair coiffured and her body clothed in bands of beads.

Astrologers. The officials who are astrologers know what part of the body may be affected if, say, the sun is near an eclipse or the moon is in her first quarter. They can tell what stars rule and govern the head, the body, the limbs, the organs, and the character or disposition. They explain why stars fall, the path the greater lights travel, from whence the lightning comes and why it strikes some houses or cattle or people and spares others, what makes the noise called thunder, and the reasons of long droughts, heavy rains, tornado winds, and the pestilences of both darkness and noonday.

A Ndembo astrologer narrates the following: "The sun's journey is from his great winter house along to his rest-house, called his middle house or his little house, where he stays two days, then goes on to his great summer house, where he stays three days before going on. Now the sun is born in his winter house, for that is the house also of Mary, the universal mother; and from his birth his life in progress of season is as the life of a man. It is not as the life of other heavenly bodies; and all men's lives are not the same. The sun's life is strong and successful. Now the Pleiades are the sun's elder brothers, but they have never become suns. They

remain stars; and their highest work is to be the heralds or messengers of their greater brother. In the first days they had their chance of becoming suns, and they did not accept that chance. So it is with some men." (The word used here for house is the Kongo word for dwelling-house or home. The influence of European mission-school teaching may be responsible for calling the sun's birth-house the house of "Mary.")

The falling stars are dying children (Ofiokpo); a babe that cries overmuch does so because the star under which it was born has faded out of the heavens (Gelede); when the stars are not propitious no journey must be started or new work begun (Egbo and other Nigerian societies). The understanding white master acknowledges this last, and if he has to take sides against it is very relieved when nothing untoward happens. Nda teaches that the sun passes through five stages, and at each is responsible for the creation of an element, these being said to be fire, water, earth, wood, and metal. Ndembo include in the primordial elements, heaven, sunshine, rain, thunder, lightning, mountains, plains, vapour, and wind, and give each a ruling star; and Nkimba add to the sun, moon, earth, sea, stars, the "big things" or "symbolic things," light, darkness, tornado, and quietness.

DIVINERS

The officials who practise divination use augury, crystal-gazing, geomancy, haruspication, natural phenomena, prodigies, scapulimancy, sortilege, and many another method that has never been catalogued.

In the matter of *augury* they, like the officers of ancient Rome, who first gave the science a name, interpret the cry and flight of birds or the muscular spasms of an ailing child; read a message from the

AN OFFICIAL DIVINER

(Photo: A. M. Duggan-Cronin.)

roar or whine of a beast of prey or the automatic twitchings of a suddenly decapitated fowl; and volubly tell past, present and future by the direction of a lightning-flash or the duration of a thunder-clap, or the swimming of berries in a bowl.

To the AFA diviner the passing of a hawk or an eagle means victory in a fight or success in a wager, but the hoot of an owl is unlucky. To her of BUNDU a parrot overlooking a sleeping child or a playing babe means good fortune, but the same bird appearing near a woman who has laid aside her garment is the worst of omens. The same lady warns expectant mothers not to walk under the shadow of a bird in flight, especially that of a vulture, nor step over a lizard running across the path. (Yet if these errors are committed, the juices of certain plants rubbed upon the forehead or around the nipples will avert the evil consequences.) At a birth the noise of animals is harmful (AGBAIA) as is also the presence in the house or in the garments of the attendants of any knotted string or material (CHIBADOS), but the flight of birds (BUNDU) or butterflies (BWETI) about the house is a cause for rejoicing.

The ELUKU diviner has the habit, known to the Polynesians, of setting up sticks that by their standing or falling tell the women of the village how their men are faring in work or sport. He of JAMBOI finds a prediction in the flight of bees, and he of IKUNG from the direction taken in the march of the driver ants, and the NGBE man reads a presage of the future in the mutterings of the voice of a novice in a trance, even though his own ventriloquism has produced that voice.

The MUKANDA man has a writing stick; a bit of wood slung to a length of bamboo, like the "descending pencil" of the Chinese, the bamboo being tied into arc-shape in order to leave the suspended stick free to circle and write at the will and wish of its owner.

The messages it writes may be in characters unknown to any of the onlookers. Other "planchette tools" able to work without conscious volition or effort of the operators are owned by the diviners of MALANDA, NANAM and OKONKO. Kindred work is done with branches of young palm-trees (that have not borne fruit) and sprigs of olive, pomegranate, apricot and tamarisk. By the shrinking or expanding, splitting or warping of metals and woods in the heat of the sun, by the curling of hoopoo and eagle or vulture and parrot feathers in the heat of a fire, and in a thousand other ways, these diviners unlock the door of fate and explain the good or bad luck of their clients and friends.

Crystal-gazing and stone-gazing, or "crystal vision," is common. This science is often the prerogative of the Head or his Deputy. The stones used are numbered amongst the sacred possessions of the societies, and are rarely seen outside the council house or the sacred enclosure. They are carefully guarded, and during thunderstorms are covered lest they attract the lightning and so bring harm to their possessors. White people do the same with looking-glasses.

PORO has its "seven sacred stones," two being fragments of black lava, two being sea-rounded pebbles, the fifth a large stone that has the quality of porousness, and that has imbedded in it what looks like a fragment of black coral; the sixth a piece of rock roughly carved by nature into the form of a skull, said to have been found at the top of Sugarloaf Mountain, and the seventh a rounded flat shale of cryolite glass whose milky depths look fathomless. All have surfaces smoothed with oil and the constant use of generations of hands.

Both NGBE and NIMM have stones that look like amber, and ORO, EGBO, OGBONI and ORISHA have stones roughly shaped by man or nature into

human form. That of ORO may be a *bætylus*, a meteoric bethel stone, perhaps once the prized possession of an early Semitic, migratory family or individual. NDEMBO owns little stone and wood figures, each having a glass stomach, and APOWA also has images. BUTWA has one about six inches long with a hole in the thorax, into which the operator inserts a finger when gyrating it for divination purposes. Most are enclosed in caskets of leather, metal or in "garments" of skin, some human, in leaves or other material, or in a bath of oil, and some have eyes of aggry beads; an ancient ornament, known to the excavators of the old-world cities of Beluchistan and the tombs at Thebes, and sometimes washed up or dug up from the earth of the West Coast. They are known in some parts as "rainstones," because they are believed to come down with the rain. A few of them can be seen in the British Museum.

Haruspication, a science practised originally in Egypt, may be by the examination of bezoar stones or hair balls taken from the stomachs of animals, or as in AYAKA by placing the liver (OFIOKPO uses a piece of intestine) in a bowl of water. If it floats, the death that is being diagnosed is declared to have been a natural one.

PORO, OGBONI, OSHORBO, and other society officials also share the Ciceronian doubt "if frogs by croaking and oxen by snuffing the air give us signs to foretell the weather, why should there not be omens in the fibres of a victim's entrails?" As there are now no human sacrificial bodies, they do as well as they can with the less prophetic bodies of beasts and birds, finding missing clues that solve the cause of a tragedy, as did the Babylonians, or learn the names of criminals by the colour, the smell, the position or the condition of the organs, arteries or bones.

AMPORA and MUKANDA diviners have *scapulimancy* amongst their arts, and gain all the knowledge they desire from the cracks and seams in bones.

Sortilege, or the casting of lots, is a frequent custom, the dice often being well-thumbed bones, and a calabash serving as the leather cap of Agamemnon. Kola and other nuts are used. The "dice" are scattered by a sudden twist of the wrist on the ground, or on a mat or cloth, and from the pattern they make the trouble of an invalid may be diagnosed, or an answer found to a family or village problem. So skilful are the manipulators that five times out of six they can reproduce a special pattern. The implements used, whatever their nature, are by some officials divided into three groups, one standing for good, another for evil, and the third for the man or the woman desiring their use.

AFA use a string of eight pieces of bark, known as *ekpélle*, fastened in two groups. This is thrown to the ground, and answers the questions asked by the combinations of the outsides or insides seen uppermost. An ingenious person has computed the possible combinations of the eight pieces at two hundred and forty-six. An official of the same society also divines with sand spread over a circular board. This is violently twirled and shaken, and the interpretation of the aspect of the sand, like that of the Nile mud by the Egyptians, explains the problem.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIETY DOCTORS

Their Training—Their Duties—"Smelling Out"—Charm-makers—Superintending Ordeals—Their Skill—Their Medicines—Their Magic Potions.

Mystery permeates the whole of the African's life by day and night. Without it existence would be to him inconceivable. But as he fears what he does not know he finds it easy to rely upon those who have no fear of the unknown, and that reliance, simple, direct, all-embracing, enables the witch-doctors, no matter how vast their number, to find continuous and lucrative employment.

Yet, as a special class, they are much misunderstood, and, frequently without cause, much maligned. Like other well-meaning people they are condemned for a name, and a name not of their own choosing. The word "witch", or a word that can properly be so translated, is not to be found, as far as the writer knows, in any of the languages of the continent. Most of the words now so translated will be found on examination to have been added to the vocabularies by European linguists to tide over an awkward absence. The nearest native word (on the West Coast) to the European or American idea of "witch" is the Kongo *ndoki*, and that in its meaning leans more to the side of wizardry than witchcraft.

THEIR TRAINING

Their training is hard and long. To be a MASUBORI *Boka* a man must be a graduate of the society of

proved loyalty, and he must be willing to undergo three years' training. For the first few months of it he must take the medicines prepared by the *Bokaye*, his tutors, "to increase his capacity for understanding his own nature and those he will be called upon to heal," and for the next few months he must employ himself sampling those he himself prepares. During this time he resides in the *gidan tsafi*, the medicine hut of the society, and from there he goes out to live in the bush, solitary and without cover. It is in this state he meets and surmounts all the threatened dangers to his life and his peace of mind, passing through ordeals prepared by those into whose ranks he desires to enter. Whilst seeking roots and herbs he encounters monsters and spectres that attempt his injury, and incidentally try to scare him from his chosen task. Each ordeal is progressive in menace and terror. He may be seriously wounded in defending himself. Some die from their injuries. If he wins through, he undergoes a vigil of five days and nights, each day sacrificing a red cock and white hen and burning continuous incense to propitiate the helpful deities, and to warn away those who are the enemies of all doctors. He then spends a year in apprenticeship to the *Bokaye*, and, after further sacrifices of vigil and incense-burning, in the third year he can build his own hut, furnish it with all the necessary dried frogs, scorpions, snakes, bats, chameleons, etc., hang on his walls, his special offerings to his favourite guardian deities —and commence his practice.

The Butwa *Nyanga ya bwilande* (Fetish or Spear doctor) to receive initiation must make himself known to the "father" of the society, who takes him outside the village, where, "choosing a suitable spot, they hoe up a little mound and place a clay pot upon it with some aromatic herbs inside. They then pour water into it, and when all is mixed the

DOCTOR OF THE BILI SOCIETY

novice kneels down on the ground and drinks. Others beat with their pestles on the ground as they walk round and round him, until he shows signs of being 'possessed,' the sign of that being his first attempts at ventriloquism. He may presently strike up a little song, such as,

> 'A child who asked for a crown,
> Found it among the departed spirits:
> Here there must be no crying and tears,
> Nothing but music and song.'

They lead him back to the village, where he gives himself a new name, saying: 'I'm the spirit world, whence the noises come.' Then he listens as though to the sound of footsteps audible only to him, dances, sings, gesticulates, foams at the mouth. He is seized by the fetish-doctors of the society and a green leaf is put on his head. He is warned not to speak. He is locked up in a hut. The next morning they feed him with 'spirit-food,' a medicine only known to themselves, but which is said to contain the eye of a red cock amongst other things. He is made to stand exposed for some time, and then led to the 'sacred mound' or 'rock' or 'enclosure,' where the 'father' introduces him to the mystery of other potent concoctions, some made from the ashes of human bodies, that enable him to understand and reply to the speech of the after-death spirits. This part of the ceremony, the giving of 'freedom,' is followed by his introduction to the chief fetish of the society, the *bwanga bwa kalunga*. That is equivalent to the bestowal of a diploma, but he has yet much to learn before he can commence to practise."

He goes into the bush. After some months he returns and is "placed on a mat in the middle of the chief's compound, and the people gather to dance and sing about him. From their midst the 'father' springs forward, spear in hand, and after some

flourishes with the weapon makes a wound on the man's chest. The man is recumbent. He must not cry when he is wounded. Some never move when the blow is received. The spear is supposed to pierce his heart. He is dead. As the blood flows it is caught in a calabash, and the supposed dead body and the living blood are carried outside the village to a prepared hut. (There is a similar scene between the Zulu doctor, *Indaba nzimbi*, and Macumazahn, in Rider Haggard's story of *Allen's Wife*.)"

Here he remains until he is healed. "Only the initiated may visit that hut. In it the 'body' is washed with fetish decoctions. 'It' is made to drink its own blood. It is trampled upon, and thus, wounded, bruised, and weak from drenching, returns to 'life.' There is then the ceremony of the 'marking,' chalks being used in making circles and stripes and spots, of many colours, about his body. The eyes are whitened. Afterwards a costume is provided (the 'cap and gown') and a set of fetish objects given to aid in future work.

After some months "he is led back to the village by his, now, fellow doctors, with drums and dancing, and on reaching the centre of the houses dances his first dance in official dress. He takes the opportunity of shouting his new name, 'I'm *Kashingu!*' (The Spinning Top) he cries, or something else considered suitable. He takes up a position on his own mat and holds his first levee, receiving presents, beads and food generally."

That only those are allowed to practise who have been correctly initiated is proven by the number of cases quoted by travellers of "official" executions of the unqualified, and others have only escaped a like fate owing to European activities in their district.

THEIR DUTIES

Their duties are manifold and multitudinous; beyond the legitimate healing they are rain-makers, plague- and pest-destroyers, clairvoyants, liaison officers between the two worlds, conductors of ordeals or "smellers out" (here overlapping the duties of the diviners) and charm-makers.

"A true understanding of the medicine man would enable a European inquirer to write a wonderful book of nature, viewed by men as part of themselves, and not viewed objectively and scientifically as we are apt to do," says one writer; and another declares: "They have power of drawing inferences and making deductions from known facts . . . and may be called philosophers, even if primitive, and scientists, although as yet in embryo."

"Of all the authorities, the individual, the family, the clan, the tribe, the doctor comes first and foremost, for practically all the business of life must be brought to him and pass through his hands."

"SMELLING OUT"

The idea behind the ceremony known to Europeans as the "smelling out" of a criminal is that the sense of fear always betrays the guilty. With the philosopher Chuang Tzŭ, the society doctors think that "the open criminal is punished by the law, but the secret sinner is tormented by devils." This explains the procedure of the Kono man, who chooses an egg of venerable age, one warranted to explode with the least mishandling, and passes it round the group of folk interested in the trial, "and, as sure as fate, directly the man or woman responsible for the theft or whatever has caused the trial touches it, the egg bursts, making a terrible mess of the poor

wretch of a culprit, whose trembling fingers have given him or her away."

An often used "implement" for this purpose is a small replica of the society's chief sacred medicine, like the tiny *bwanga bwa kalunga* horn carried by the BUTWA doctors. The trial in which this plays a part may be by carrying it across a stream or spinning it, a hole being pierced in the horn for the latter purpose and an iron rod used as the pivot.

The KATAHWIRA doctor uses bits of sticks, sometimes those used for cleaning the teeth. The story is told that a certain King of Dahomey caused his twenty wives to yield their tooth-sticks for the purpose of an ordeal. They were very like in appearance, and length. The king had a white missionary staying with him, and handing the sticks to his visitor he asked if the white man could tell from the appearance of the sticks which owner was the unfaithful wife. The missionary acknowledged his inability to do so. They were then given to the king's head-doctor who, after examination of the ragged chewed ends, without hesitation selected one, whose owner afterwards confessed her unfaithfulness.

"Pointing" by animate and inanimate things is a frequent device. A BOVIOWAH doctor has a trained lizard for this work. He will enter a village and call out all those who have anything to do with the problem being solved, and walk round the group, fondling his pet, and talking to it in some outlandish lingo, his expression being that of boredom with the whole proceeding. Presently the lizard escapes from the caressing fingers, darts upwards to the shoulder of its master, and "points." Directly the little head is out-thrust the official becomes alert. He puts the lizard on his open palm, stretches his arm towards the indicated person, and it leaps from the hand to the garments of the shivering, frightened individual, and there clings. Other "mediums"

have been known, a vulture being used some years ago by a TONGO-PLAYER in Sierra Leone.

AYAKA and OKONKO doctors rub together metal and wood, a spear-head against a chopping-block or a wood-chip against an anvil, whilst the complainant recites his or her grievance and demands redress, and just as a certain name is being mentioned or a certain suspicion is being hazarded, lo! the spear-head cleaves to the chopping-block or the chip refuses to be pulled from the anvil.

An EGBO man will bring a calabash of beans, some of them loaded with a paste of gums and herbal decoctions, and will twirl this dish round and round before him, and then he will suddenly stop and hold it out for inspection. Each bean is said to represent a suspected person, and they are seen now to be, all save one, in a heap in the centre of the vessel. The solitary one clings to the side, and has to be forcibly removed.

An ANKOI man takes a twig from the nearest tree or bush, "baptizes" it in the smoke of some special fuel, and holds it in his fingers in much the same way that sticks are held by water-diviners. He then walks round the people, and the twig moves when he is opposite the person wanted. A variation of this is the "whip" sometimes used by PORO men. In a case that happened in Murray Town Battery, in 1917, the weapon was a bit of stick and two lanyards borrowed from artillery gunners. They were washed in a preparation, and the hands, arms, chest, and forehead of the man chosen to hold the whip were also anointed with the mixture. Then the assistant, a misshapen large-headed man, walked down the ranks of the collected people followed by the directing official. There were hundreds of bush-cutters, house-boys, hammock boys, sanitary boys, and native servants on the parade, but the whip found the culprit, the lanyard-thongs writhing and

squirming snake-fashion before starting to thrash the face and chest of the selected man. The misshapen individual sweated in an attempt to quieten the whip, but failed, the cords striking heavily enough to draw blood. The man whipped was afterwards arrested by the police, and in prison at Freetown confessed to the thefts concerned, telling where the stolen goods were hidden.

In some of the societies two doctors often act in opposition to one another, as if one desired to bring the culprit to justice and as if the other was deliberately confusing the trail or was helping the accused to escape. In IKUNG they are known by titles meaning Health and Sickness, and in KOFOO as "the moderate one" and "the avenger."

The title "smelling-out" may not be altogether a misnomer. In the midst of what most Europeans declare to be appalling stenches, most Negroes retain a sensitive appreciation of differing odours. If it is true, as has been reported, that Rudyard Kipling claims to be able to find his way round the world blindfold, relying only on his sense of smell, it is as true to claim that some Africans might successfully find their way home from any part of the Coast guided alone by use of the same sense. In mixed assemblies they can detect their own tribal odour, even when blindfolded, and from a village gathering they can single out without looking the members of their own family. This may be why some puberty school tutors teach that both deities and after-death spirits may be known in this same way, those friendly by their fragrance.

CHARM-MAKERS

The Africans delight in charms and the African doctors are delighted to supply them. There are stones that confer supernatural powers and benefits;

some may be engraved with the secret signs of the societies, magic abraxas and abracadabra, and others very potent in the stopping of the flow of blood from wounds, like those once known to Sir Walter Scott. There are bags of herbs and strips of cloth or parchment or bits of paper, paper and parchment containing written characters, or strings of beads, threaded bits of metal, enwrapped hairs or bones or cauls, all chosen at turn of tide, fullness of moon or at some other propitious time. There is the *kunkuma* broom, to be had of KATAHWIRA for the preservation of the household peace, the *ahunum* bead to be had of HOMOWO to give discernment to the eye, the *bansere* leaf to be had of MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH as a sure defence against assault, a special *bwanga* to be had of BUTWA that causes vampire bats to destroy the crops of enemies; the hair of an albino put inside the hollow of a blue bead by NKIMBA to make lovers more loving, and the *cabe* or *oten* (it has many other names), "a thoroughly bad fetish," that can be used for the slaying of people by sympathetic magic, and to be had from nearly every known society.

The charms are made of beetle shells, small buck horns, tortoise shells, tiny gourds or seed-pods, lion and leopard claws, birds' bills, the head of a hoopoo, the scale of a snake, a bit of the under-lip of an ass, a hair from the ear of a horse, a double tooth of a camel, the skin of a chameleon, or a bit of poisonous creeper. One of the strongest of all, that to avert the evil eye, may be simply a hair plucked from one's own eyebrow or eyelash (MASUBORI), or the nail of a dead man (AMPORA), or the beak of a bird (OGBONI), or a bit of chalk (NDEMBO) or clay (NKIMBA), or a mark on one's own body made with the same wash or dye that has been used to make society designs on house-walls and domestic utensils.

They are used for every conceivable object, for

protection of self or harm to another, for prolongation of life, for conservation of strength, for success in work and play and sport and love, for gaining advantage in bargaining, for the safety of crops and their sure harvesting, and for purposes connected with marriage, childbirth, fertility and death.

SUPERINTENDING ORDEALS

As the superintendents of medicinal ordeals they, alone among the physicians of the world, take some part of their own medicine before applying the rest to the object for which it is made. In doing this they are clever enough to split a calabar bean, that dread fruit, and swallow one half without deleterious effect, although the person who swallows the other half immediately dies. They themselves handle the hot iron or plunge their hand into boiling cauldrons or walk on fire before ordering others to do so. If they are asked why these tests are harmless to them, whilst being fatal to ordinary people, they do not of course say that if iron is perfectly clean and made white-hot it can be touched by the tongue with impunity, and that if those conditions cannot be attained, they alone know chemicals that convert the ordeal, for them, into a harmless amusement. They do not mention the fact that ointments applied to the hand prevent scalding by boiling oils, or that they have knowledge of medicines that counteract the effect of poisons and enable them to be taken without fear of death. They reply simply, "Those whose hearts are clean cannot be harmed."

THEIR SKILL

Their curative practices are hard to describe and impossible to catalogue. As general practitioners they mix up magic and exorcism and simples and

decoctions and hypnotism and clairvoyance and spiritualism, and yet have such method in their madness that properly qualified European doctors often remain to praise where they halted to scoff. They can by some fluid they concoct and force into the body galvanise a dead man into the movements of seeming life. They can raise a sullen recumbent doubter, in the last stages of ague, by a mesmerism apparently produced by a touch of a wand. They have power to throw a medium into a cataleptic sleep that will last several days, during which time the body of the sleeper is insensible to pain although the blood continues to flow normally through its veins. They bring about marvels of healing by hypnotism, thinking it better than drugs for some patients—for hypochondriacs are found in Africa as well as other places—and perform miracles by auto-suggestion. A European doctor practising in Africa writes that he "saw a medicine man cure a woman of some internal malady by convincing her that a large clot of blood had formed an obstruction, and after much well-acted effort produce a ball of red cotton as the offending cause of the sickness, whereupon the woman, who had been sick for a long time, literally took up her bed and walked off, perfectly cured."

Working on the principle that faith in the healer is the mainspring of their art, they pretend to override and overawe nature and to be the masters of fate. By taboos that seem absurd but are based on wise knowledge they preach the doctrine of sunshine and cleanliness and cheerfulness and laughter. Because their patients are suspicious of what they do not understand, these doctors continue the ancient methods and the superstitious rites to disguise new and strange remedies. For instance, a doctor belonging to the Ampora society gives medicine to all the patient's family, on the understanding that a

sympathetic atmosphere helps along a cure, in the same way as he did before he took a government dispensing course, and a BUNDU lady doctor who took a St. John's Ambulance certificate in Freetown uses the document on the foreheads of her patients as a cure for headache. Quite a clever man in Sherbro, who is a doctor of the TONGO-PLAYERS, and who has discovered a natural cocaine that, rubbed on the gums, enables teeth to be drawn with a minimum of discomfort, still pulls out his own eyelashes to give him keener sight. A *Nion* of DUS who has a great reputation as a specialist in ophthalmic troubles first spits in the eyes of his patients and prays this prayer, "O all-powerful ones: overcome the evil spirit that possesses this man: we can only give medicine, but thou canst give health."

They still talk of pain as something caged and confined that can be set at liberty by cupping and blood-letting, they still tie a string tightly round the temples to cure headache, and relieve a man suffering from a surfeit of turtle by painting his body with olive-coloured clay, they still murmur incantations (generally in the "old" language of the society) to assist their work, but for all that it can be said that they are beginning to acquire what may be called a scientific mind, and basing their remedies on a study of natural laws.

THEIR MEDICINES

Their knowledge of preventative and curative medicines has puzzled and surprised the very elect. In these days of the, comparatively, near mission hospital or government dispensary their methods can be examined better than in past years, and it is acknowledged that to the ancient homeopathy (that may have been taught them by migratory

Arabs) they now link the newest allopathy known to the European medical schools.

They cure giddiness by *mpuluka* bark, specially treated with oil and salt, and influenza with cassava water containing the essence of *madiadia* grass and the leaf of the *kuva* and the *kiakasa* plant. For colic they give copious draughts of a fluid made from cassava root and the fruit of the *lembenzau*. They make useful suppositories from the juice of *sudia* leaves, salted and peppered. Poultices of cassava meal are used with a good deal of success, and acacia gum spread on certain leaves heals many wounds. For eye trouble they use onion juice and salt or pounded shell and molasses, lotus leaves and goat's milk, palm-leaves and salt or powder of sycamore leaves, or sulphate of zinc and honey. The sycamore powder is also used, dry and mixed with anything sweet, for diarrhœa. The sap of the *luwiki-wiki* leaf mixed with oil is used for earache, and they stop excessive bleeding with boiled *luziezie* plant, using this also as an anæsthetic. From the gum of the euphorbia they make a good salve for cuts and abrasions, for an emetic they use the sap of the *ndamba*, and they have uses for many other gums, especially in the cure of skin diseases and pyorrhea.

They devise inhalers for chest and lung troubles, the patient sitting in a thick enveloping blanket over a pot in which are boiling herbs, the fumes acting like nitrate of amyl or stramonium. They make a "Turkish Bath" over a bed of hot ashes on which certain leaves are spread, putting a mat over the leaves, and making the diaphoretic complete by shrouding the patient, who is lying upon the mat, with heavy cloths and blankets.

In one thing at least they have anticipated a late discovery of modern pathology, for they have long cured general paralysis by allowing the patient

to be bitten by malarial mosquitoes. This is done because they believe it is beneficial to bring rival germs (although they do not give them that title) into deadly conflict. The doctors of MUNGI and NKAMBA and NDEMBO fight the *vidudu* of paralysis with the *pilintu* of malaria, these terms being their equivalents for bacilli. In this connection the following quotation is significant: "That malaria was caused by mosquitoes," writes a medical missionary, "burst upon an astonished world about thirty years ago. But the African knew it long before and he knew also a bitter drug which effected a cure. The fly which devours mosquitoes he also recognised and gave a friendly welcome to, when other flies were driven off and killed."

Whatever their knowledge of toxicology may be according to the European idea, they choose the right poisons for the right objects and "not with the haphazard intention of merely causing death by general blood-poisoning," and they have no uncertainty when they are seeking antidotes. They make ordeal draughts from the calabar bean, the *mbundu* root, the tangena nut, the aconite root, the strophanthus creeper, the bark, *muavi*, of the erythrophloem, and from datura flowers, as lovely and as white as Easter lilies. From every known dangerous snake they extract the venom, and carefully preserve it for their own purposes. They make their poisonous medicines and extracts palatable by mixing them with the juices of the pawpaw, the mammy apple, the banana, the breadfruit, the guava, and other edible fruits, just as the European pharmacist sugarcoats his pills for the same purpose. And they have poisons the secrets of which still baffle European minds, like that possessed by the officials of OGBONI; a poison that after being administered produces no visible effects for months, yet renders death inevitable.

THEIR MAGIC POTIONS

Their skill in "magic potions" is greater than that of Queen Grimhild. The Bori doctor has a medicine of powdered owls, Egbo one of dried baboon flesh, Masubori one made from the dust found in the tombs of saints. Ebomici doses for intestinal troubles with the chopped hair of the patient. Butwa splits a lizard down the back and places it over the spleen of the patient, above perforations made in his skin. The same man also paints sloughing ulcers and fever sores with a feather dipped in water mixed with the scrapings of copper stones. There is an Eyo ointment of cremated newts and beetles for rubbing on the gums for toothache. Afa blows smoke from burning horn into the eyes for ophthalmic trouble. Ayaka and Okonko give soil of an ant-hill for internal troubles, and make poultices for burns from earth taken from beneath a flour mortar. The Bundu women apply masticated food to the joints for rheumatism and arthritis. The Nda doctor squirts pepper from his mouth into the eyes of a victim of epilepsy and uses it as a cathartic in cases of apoplexy. From a crude dummy teat dipped in banana wine the Nkimba man or Nkamba woman, or their children, suck camwood and chalk for the St. Vitus dance, or drink water in which stones have been boiled for gastric troubles. Their doctors chew a pepper-corn and spit the juice into the ears and mouth for brain diseases, and make up 'smelling salts' for headache and neuralgia by tying into a bundle the fin of a fish, the head of a snake, the foot of a fowl, and the tail of a rat, all ancient and all pungent.

The Kufong *fange* medicine, which is taken in large doses, is a mixture of unmentionable things, but is said to be quite a cure for both lethargy from weakness and sheer laziness. The use of animals'

urine as a medicine or in the making up of medicines is common, and sometimes animal or human excreta are used. Of the first there is this to remember: sal ammoniac, a well-known chloride, was first made in the Libyan Desert near the Temple of Ammon from the urine of camels.

CHAPTER V

THE SUPREME OFFICIALS

The Council—The Head—The Idea behind him —His Election—His Duties—His Disguise.

The supreme officials of the societies are the Councillors, the Deputy Head, and the Head. The last word has been adopted instead of "President" or "Grand Master" as it, in the writer's opinion, fits more nearly the titles borne by these functionaries.

THE COUNCIL

The Council of the society is composed of a number of men or women chosen from the principal grade, sometimes being the entire grade. The number varies. Three or Five or Seven, or multiples of these, are frequently found. AMPORA has three, YASSI five, MUNGI nine, EGBO twenty-one, BUTWA twenty-four, and PORO twenty-five. OGBONI has forty-nine, divided into seven groups. It may be built up to represent the grades of the society, each grade sending one councillor, or it may be composed of the chief officers of the branches or lodges, as in PORO. Of their number a proportion may act as an executive. Of the twenty-five of PORO fifteen act as an inner council or court of appeal, and five as an executive.

Women councillors sit on the councils of some of the male-membership societies, but generally in an ex-officio capacity. The Head of BUNDU, the *Mama Koome*, is a silent member of the council of PORO, being supposed to be invisible to all save the

Grand Tasso. On the AMPORA council there is a woman member, the *Dehboi*, and that of ELUNG and one or two others includes the principal wife of the Head.

The government of the societies is founded on the idea of democracy, matters judicial and legislative, also religious, being supposed to be settled by the members, but in practice the council acts in most matters with sovereign disdain for anything other than its own verdict.

Council meetings are never formally ended. They are "suspended." As PORO says, "Society business never ends." The usual formula, after a certain time spent in discussion, is for a councillor to look upwards and say, "It rains!" Thereupon all leave.

The members of the council, with the officials, represent their societies at local coronations and at the death-bed and the funerals of chiefs, in much the same way that members of the Privy Council are officially present on state occasions in England. They are also "ceremonially" present (which may mean that their mask is present) at the celebrations, the festivals, the processions, and the dances held by their society. Some proportion of them go into retreat with the officials, where they act as tutors and guardians. They are much sought after to preside at special gatherings like the inauguration of a new industrial venture, at religious observances for the staying of plague, pest or protracted drought, or at social festivities such as the naming of a royal son or that of the first-born of a notable member.

The office is one of great honour and dignity, and the authority of the office is very real. Most councillors have served long probation in other ranks, and are aged men when promoted. In some societies the rule is that they must have been members of the next highest grade for twenty years before being eligible for election.

The councillors of the Law-God societies rank as priests, as do some in other associations, such as BUTWA, whose councillors appointed to ecclesiastical duties are called "Mothers of the Crystal Fetish."

The BABENDE member who has reached council rank is addressed as follows: "Now that you are to take this *pangwe* (Elder's Staff) you must yourself avoid crimes, and you must prevent others from becoming criminals. Give good advice to the young; watch over the observance of the laws; and see to it that the chief governs for the country's weal. You are entitled now to intervene if there is a quarrel between persons or families or villages or tribes; keep sacred that trust. All people are descended from one couple and are brethren; they must not shed the blood of their brothers. Two people have given birth to us all, and now we are a big nation; would you like to see us by fights and slaughters reduced again to two? Take this staff; advise the young; punish the wicked; guide the weak; remember your vow; remember your duty; and ever and always remind yourself that you are an honoured member of a band of brothers."

THE HEAD

The Head may be one person or two. When dual, the office is shared by a male and female, as in BILI, NIMM, and OYENI. There is nearly always a Deputy Head, and in many instances this official is the public counterpart of the Supreme One. A woman may preside over a male society, as in ELUKU and JOOSAI, or a mixed membership society, as MASUBORI and DYORO. A woman may be Deputy to a male Head, as in BORI.

The title given to the Head may be that of the guardian deity of the society, as in AYAKA; or that of a king, as the *Bai Sherbro* of KUFONG; or that of

the opposite sex, as the *Mother of Ekong* of EKONGOLA; or of the society, as *The Ogboni* and the *Grand Egbo*.

THE IDEA BEHIND HIM

The idea behind the individual called to the office may be that he or she is the "Voice" of the guardian deity, or that of the society itself. When the first, the Head may be either the Oracle or the High Priest of the Oracle. If the Oracle, he or she may be considered just the Voice or much more than the Voice, that is, he or she may be the spoken word or the speaker. If the last then the Head ranks as a deity; omnipotent, therefore not to be gainsaid. His will is then supreme, even the council being merely the echo of his decisions.

Thus the Head officials of AYAKA and OKONKO are merely Voices enunciating the messages of the society's Oracles, but the Head of ORO is supposed to be the living embodiment of the god *Olorun*, the Head of AFA is the "shadow" of the god *Ifa*, the Head of IKUNG is the "child" of the god *Ikun*, and the male and female who rule OYENI are declared to be "direct descendants" of the god of the same name.

The idea of the Head being the High Priest of the guardian deity is seen in the *Grand Tasso* of PORO, the *Grand Egbo*, *The Ogboni*, the *Elder Ebaku* of NKIMBA, the *Balogun* of ORISHA, the *Nyenge* of NKANDA, and in other of the Law-God societies; and in MASUBORI and other Priestly associations the Head is the Priestess or Priest of the god worshipped.

There is also the idea of royalty (the dual Headship of NIMM is shared by a Royal Father and a Royal Mother), and the idea of wisdom (the Head of NDEMBO is *Nganga*, The Wise One).

Whether or not representing the guardian god, they are generally considered "sacred" persons.

The idea of their office overshadows their personality in much the same way as did that of the angels mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures. Therefore, they are hedged about by ceremony and superstition, and kept sacrosanct by a tabu circle that even the leading officials and the highest of the councillors dare not pass. For this purpose also strange reports are circulated as to the nature of their birth or as to their physical peculiarities. Claims that they were supernaturally born are frequently made, and many assertions may be heard (like that of the monochism of the *Alapini* of EGUNGUN or the eunuchal disability of the Head of KONGCORONG) that suggest that among these men (and women) are more hermaphrodites and monstrosities than ever Pliny knew.

Egungun Mask.

Their seclusion is in some cases quite real. A few are said never to be seen at all. Their presence is indicated by a pillar or a mask. The *Grand Egbo* is non-existent as a personality. He is a pillar, carved with phallic signs and a tortoise. At ceremonials his Deputy wears his official insignia. The Head of ORO is a mask, sometimes set upon a pillar, said to bear the image of the god *Olorun*, and sometimes carried on the shoulders of an official. The Head of AYAKA allows only an arm to be seen, and that merely when he stretches it round the corner of his hut, at celebrations, to receive the gifts of the faithful. The *Grand Tasso* goes into a privacy hardly ever broken, living and dying alone. When he realises that the hand of death is upon him he goes into the bush, builds there a palm-frond thatch, and, lying within its shade, awaits calmly his dis-

solution. After a period of time the council meets for the election of his successor, whose first duty must be the finding of that lonely, ant-cleaned skeleton to add its skull to the others that form the official mitre. The *Mama Koome* of BUNDU is a solitary old woman who allows no one to visit her for any longer time than that occupied by a consultation, who denies herself the solace of relative and friend when ill, and who may not be buried by any other than the *Grand Tasso*, whose duty and privilege it is.

Even when the Head is merely a promoted member of the council, the secret of his identity may be known only to a very few. He may be a well-known or a little-known person in his district, living normally most of his days, and coming into ordinary daily contact with his officers and members, the majority not knowing, and the others not telling, his society importance. During the few hours of the few days of each year when he assumes the livery of his office, his disguise will be as impenetrable as the closed armour of the knights of old.

HIS ELECTION

The Head may be born to his office or be elected to it. It is, with very few exceptions, a life appointment.

Examples of the hereditary right are becoming more infrequent. BORI and LUBUKU still acknowledge it. Both have local kings as nominal lords, the authority being delegated to a council-elected Deputy. EGBO and BELLI-PAARO have of recent years thrown off this survival of the years for that of election, as did PORO about the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Naimbanna dynasty of Sierra Leone came to an end. GELEDE, KWAGA, and OKONKO have families within their memberships

who own the hereditary right to nominate the Head, but the greater number of the councils retain the right to elect one of their number to the office.

The election itself is not a hasty matter. It has been known to last nine months, according to Lieutenant George Maclean (afterwards Governor of Cape Coast Castle and husband of L.E.L.), who witnessed the election of a *Grand Tasso* about the year 1827. It may be carried through with all the dignity given by rite and ceremony as ancient as anything known in the land, and under laws as little to be broken as those famous ones of the Medes and Persians, or it may rival in oratory and wire-pulling, in division and excitement, the election of a President in the United States.

The ritual of the ceremony is often religious in character, with uttered prayers and chanted hymns, and for scriptures long eulogies of the late Head and long vindications of the worth of the one nominated to take his place. Before the final ballot is taken in the election of a *Grand Tasso*, the senior councillor utters this prayer: "Ye chiefs and wise men, spirits of those who have led us in times past, we speak to you; we pray you show us our lord, who shall be our leader in all things: let him be the man of your appointing, not of our desire, O wise ones: let him be one to whom all may look, who shall be our secret and sacred shrine, our prayer, the guardian of our holy things, our good, our shield, his name our safety: we speak to you, O chiefs and elders: we ask you to remember past years: some of you have filled this office, and to those we now say, go to the powers who slay and keep alive, the powers who have all authority and all knowledge, and say to them, the living need guidance, guidance can only come from wisdom, give those who speak to us a wise leader: hear us, O elders, we speak to you: give us our master."

During the election the councillors may be locked up in the society house until a decision is agreed upon, food being passed to them by their friends. The voting may be by show of hands or by the dropping into a box white and black stones, shells or beads. The result is first proclaimed to an assembly of senior graduates. After an EKENE election the chosen Head assumes the mask of his predecessor, mounts the throne, and there sits whilst all the assembled members pass before him, each one dropping a blossom before him. Before the ceremony is finished he is literally hidden behind a mound of flowers.

HIS DUTIES

The first duty of the new Head may be the relighting of the Sacred Fire. In the council or society house and in the houses set apart as habitations for young members, a fire is kept alight continuously. It is this fire which is put out at the death of a Head and is relighted by the successor. Although there is no trace amidst the Negroid peoples of sun- or fire-worship, there are amongst them tribal traditions as to the origin of fire, generally explaining it as the gift of the gods to men. This may explain the place the lighting of the fire has in the society ceremonies, and why, as do the priests of the Hindu *Agni*, the Head produces the new flame by friction. Some of the Liberian society officials say that flame is a spirit, the spirit on earth or the earthly life of a deity, a heavenly spirit that reached the earth down a sunbeam.

Poro Mural Decoration.

When the chief members hear that the fire on the council hearth is cold they put out their home fires, and when the new fire is known to be kindled they send a request to the Head to share the new flame. This he does with a brand from the fire he has lit, or a special torch (like that made from millet stalks used by OYENI) relighting the house fires in the order of the grades held by the petitioners. An exception may be made to this order when honour is done to the hearth of some well-liked member who has lately taken to himself a wife, or another wife.

Then follow what have been called "The Benedictions."

That of IKUNG is the "Blessing of the Waters," the element from which *Ikun*, the guardian deity, is said to have been born. Erect in the bows of the leading canoe, as the procession of boats floats down some portion of the Congo River, his extended wand now and again sweeping the surface of the stream, the *Ikungele* recites prayers to his society's god and gives gracious benediction to the water and all within it, and to all employed upon it.

A ceremony peculiar to NKANDA is the Anointing of the Circumcision Calabash. This is a large gourd containing many small ones, each a symbol of a society circumcision, and containing as many seeds as boys who together underwent the rite. The *Nyenge* is the guardian of this possession, and anoints it annually on the anniversary of his election. Moreover, when he hears of the death of a member he takes from the vessel of that member's year one of the seeds, and throws it away.

The new priest of OYENI puts into a bowl sprigs of *wogbo*, a salt-leafed plant, and of *nyanyana*, a triple-leafed bindweed with small egg-shaped fruit, and other leaves and seaweeds. In the midst of these he places his official shark-fin sandals, covering all with sand and sea-water. Then into this mixture

he dips the end of his two-foot long official whisk of piassava, and sprinkles the sacrificial goat, the sacred possessions, and the assembled members. This is also an annual ceremony.

The ceremony of "Blessing the Sacred Possessions" is known to many societies, generally taking the form of an "anointing," and is invariably one of the earliest duties of the new Head. The "possessions" are varied and peculiar, ranging from such mystic portable shrines as the PORO *borfima*, the NDEMBO *mpungu*, the KATAHWIRA *suman*, the BUTWA *chipe cha fisoko*, or the same society's *bwanga bwa kalunga*, to such mundane things as stools and shields, staves and spears. They include council houses and men's houses and girls' houses, pillars carved and marked with the images and signs of protecting deities, members' graves, sacred rocks, divination stones, ancient masks and mitres, symbolic figures and images, and dance dresses worn at ceremonials. All these are anointed, as are the members themselves, and such society necessities as herds of goats and cows, and stores of grain. In some cases this ceremony is accompanied by sacrificial offerings to the guardian deities, the sacred objects being fresh blooded as the animals fall under the priestly knife. The possessions of the councillors, of the officials and the higher grade members, houses, farms, boats, tools, weapons, and households, may also be formally blessed by the new Head, either by anointing or by prayer, by touch of hand or official staff or baton.

Oro Images.

In the LAW-GOD societies the duties of the Head are priestly as well as governmental, not only within the membership but without, their High Priestly authority being acknowledged throughout the whole

district influenced by the society. In some cases also this sacerdotal supremacy is acknowledged by other societies, especially by those originally branches of the Law-God associations. Thus the Head of ORO is recognised as the religious ruler over half a dozen societies, including EGBO, which has itself a high priestly Head, and the *Grand Tasso* is the High Priest also of BUNDU. The *Mama Koome* may demand absolute obedience from her official and private members, may promulgate her own society laws and exercise unchecked disciplinary measures, but in spiritual matters she must bend her pride before the Head of PORO, as did the Abbess of old to the reigning Abbot of her district.

HIS DISGUISE

The description of the installation of the Priest and Priestess of OYENI includes the following. "The Elders put upon him the white cap of office and the long white gown, over which are placed many ropes of black and white beads. Round his neck they put a rough, grass rope to remind him of the ills and frailties of life. On his right wrist they place the official bead bracelet, and on his feet sandals, also ancient and valuable, made of shark fins. Then they hand him the priest's ayentso staff. The head of the Priestess is crowned by a tuft of elephant hairs, of parrot's feathers and beads, bound together with pineapple fibre and white clay. Her hair is built up into five domes, the centre one supporting the tuft. Round her neck is placed a necklace whose value might ransom a prince, being of aggry beads threaded between the official black and white ones. She also is clad in white, and on both wrists are bracelets." It is said that the priest sometimes wears his consort's head-tuft as a pendant to a collar of nyanyana.

Red is the official colour of KEMAH and TORMAI, the Head of the first-named wearing a red cloak that is decorated with feathers and strips of hide, and the last-named society staining this colour all their masks and costumes. A claim is made that the "Cloak of Kemah" has upon it specimens of the plumage or skin of all the birds and beasts known to West Africa.

Ayaka Mask.

The Head of AYAKA or his Deputy wears a mask carved from heavy wood, the weight being supported on the shoulders. It is shaped with some artistry, and might be imagined to be a humped or crouching figure with two faces and extended wings. This is said to be the form taken by one of the Ibo deities who is not only the society's guardian but also that of the homes of its members. Consequently, small replicas of the mask may be seen on the walls of Ibo houses. The hat above the upper face is strongly reminiscent of the old-time bullion military or naval epaulet.

The *Svekoi* of AMPORA apparently has two head-dresses, one a mitre and the other a mask. The first is probably a *Tasso* mitre dating from the time when this society was but a branch or lodge of PORO. It is crowned by a single skull (that of his predecessor in office) and tufts of upstanding feathers. The mask is very like that worn by the Head of Boguerra, an East African society, being crowned by ox horns of gigantic size, scraped fine and white like those worn by some of the Durban rickshaw-boys.

District Tasso Mask.

The casquet of the *Mama Koome* of BUNDU is of the same material and made after the same manner as that already described and worn by her subordinate the *Woodya*. It differs, however, in the one particular being alated after the manner of the one of AYAKA.

Afa Mask.

The AFA mask is of wood, the white face having a black band across the eyes, giving it the appearance seen in English pictures of highwaymen or burglars. Black and white masks are also worn by the ANKUMUNKO, KALOKO, and RAMENA supreme officials.

The Head of the Southern Kukuruku branch of EGUGU has a massive tortoise-shaped mask, from which protrude curved "feelers" or "tusks", and has an elongated point behind. It rests upon the shoulders of the wearer, is of hard wood, and of excellent workmanship. The body of the wearer is entirely hidden by the thick gown of rapphia fibre connected with the foundation of the mask. The tortoise as a symbol is frequently found, often as one of phallic significance, but this seems to be the solitary instance of it being shaped into a mask.

Egugu Mask and Gown.

Amongst the masks that may be phallic survivals mention must be made of those of EKONGOLA and MAWUNGU. That of the first, worn by the *Mother of Ekong*, a man, is a highly finished carving in wood, its shape roughly pyramidical, bearing the cut and

painted face and bust of a woman. The white face is drawn grotesquely, and the dress fashioned in a style that may have been suggested to the mask-maker by some picture in the possession of an early Portuguese explorer. That of the Head of MAWUNGU, a woman, is shaped to represent the face of a man. The garbs worn with both these masks are those of the opposite sex to that of the wearer.

Ekongola Mask.

The most grim of all the head-dresses is the *tanga-tanga* mitre of the *Grand Tasso* of PORO. This is a rattan frame, standing high above the head, upon which are tied the skulls of his predecessors. (In the year 1916 the writer counted sixteen upon it.) The base fits tightly about the brow, and has a lower, supporting band that clasps the head over the nose. From the one fitting round the brow hangs a veil of fibre. Green twigs are sometimes laced into the rattan, about and over some of the skulls.

Poro Tanga-Tanga.

The chiefs of the PORO branches, the *District Tassos*, wear smaller editions of this mitre, some bearing but one skull, topped grandly by a bunch of high-standing feathers of the bulo, the great plantain-eater bird.

Face screens only may be worn, veils of leaves such as are seen in parts of New Guinea, and of

fibre or reeds, or strings of tiny beads. Muslin and other material may be found amongst the Muhammedan society officials, the Head of KONGCORONG wearing one of silk, in honour, it is said, of the "founder" of that society.

Special washes and paints are used on the bodies and limbs of these supreme officials, often applied in patterns that are distinctive of the society. These are applied after, and as part of, the purification ceremonies. Aromatic and other unguents and ointments are also used in the "anointings" that often follow the purifications.

Fetish horns and charms are worn.

There may be bells hung upon the skirts, that remind one of those of the Hebrew High Priest as he appeared in the Temple at Jerusalem. Those upon the gown of the *Grand Tasso* are alternate metal tubes or plates and flat bells, said to be of ancient European manufacture, the tinkling of which warns people of his coming. When there are no skirts these musical appendages may be found fastened to armlets and garters.

Tasso Bells.

Necklaces and other ornaments may be worn, some valuable, as already described of OYENI, because rare, and some are of gold, silver and bronze, cunningly made and inset with stones of some value.

The staves carried, and the batons of elephant or antelope tails, or of metal or wood that usually precede the Head, are described in another chapter.

CHAPTER VI

CELEBRATIONS

Festivals—Remembrance of the Dead—New Birth and Fertility Rites—Purification Rites—Harvest Festivals—Processions—Dances—Dance Costumes.

Most of the societies hold annual or periodic public celebrations. These take the form of festivals with processions and dances. They may last an evening, a day and a night, forty-eight hours, seven days and seven nights (as Ogboni), or longer. They are held at hours and on days fixed by the official astrologers or on anniversaries that are of importance in the calendars of the societies. That of Oro, like the Hindu *Dusserah*, is held at new moon. They generally herald the opening of the retreat period, when the sacred enclosure is built and the puberty school conducted.

FESTIVALS

The Festivals are assemblies of all the members. They are anticipated with joy, prepared for with care, and conducted under fixed laws.

Some governments consider them illegal and do their best to stop them, others covertly permit them, and a few recognise them as a legitimate part of the native life. "Egbo Day" is a public holiday in some parts of Nigeria, and the yellow flag of the society is hoisted above the society halls and houses

with as much ceremony as is used when the national flag goes up over Government House.

They include such ceremonies as services in remembrance of the dead, dedication of new birth and other fertility rites, purification rites, and harvest thanksgivings.

Remembrance of the Dead. The festivals of this order are the " All Souls' Days " of the Negro peoples.

At the *Ikunle* of EGUNGUN the people remain kneeling all night, motionless and silent, offering the unspoken prayers of a longing heart as did the Egyptians of long ago. At dawn they rise, stand for some time facing the rising sun, then start a concerted rhythmic movement of the body, like the trembling and swaying of wind-moved leaves, that they denominate a dance. This continues for several hours, being, like the all-night vigil, a striving to help on the good estate of the departed.

The KATAHWIRIBA women, after a night of vigil, break into groups at dawn and commence a performance akin to that of the old Grecian *Thesmophoria*. They walk about chanting what they are supposed to be doing and experiencing. According to their song they journey through the gloom of the lower world to hail the spirits there; leave that and enter the upper world, the realm of sunshine, to laugh and joke with those who dwell there; and ever and anon return to the familiar scenes of this world, to mourn with those imprisoned and shackled by mundane things.

OKONKO members are busy at the earliest hour of day carrying *ibwudu*, wicker-work coffins, covered with grass mats and white cloth. They form a procession and traverse the district before placing the coffins in the compounds of the families bereaved during the preceding twelve months. Animals are sacrificed, a ram for a chief grade member and a goat for those of lesser degree, the victims being slain by the

successors to the society ranks held by the deceased. At the feast that follows the virtues of the lamented dead are extolled, and stories related of their prowess, their kindness or their wisdom.

Some Nigerian societies at their festivals renew the memorials to departed members, cutting new *alusi* strips, ten to twelve inches in length, from the sacred *ebwo* tree, and putting the strips round the walls of the council houses and on those of their own homes. The strip to commemorate a councillor or an official is cut with the bark upon it, the others are stripped.

The members of Boviowah, Butwa and Egugu make the occasion one of special attention to any unburied dead in the villages. Butwa dresses the corpse with beads, anoints it, paints the eyes with circles of white chalk, and clothes it in fine garments that have been blessed by the Head, before making it the centre of a funeral dance. The mourners, in girdles of palm and grass, form the inner ring round the body. The dance consists of movements of the body only; mostly of a raising and lowering of the body that, continued for some hours, must put a severe strain upon the muscles. Afterwards the girdles of the mourners are piled at the head of the corpse, whilst an official sacrifices a goat or a fowl to "please" the after-death spirit of the departed.

A senior official of Nkamba, who holds the rank of a priestess, "descends into the grave and arranges the bed of leaves on which the body of the departed member is to rest, receives the body and places it on the leaves, the while muttering prayers. She then sprinkles a little earth upon it, rubbing the earth from the sides of the grave with her elbows and head alternately, and nine times. She then anoints the corpse on the head, the joints of arms and legs, the buttocks, and the soles of the feet." After the grave has been closed, she plants above

it two trees, the *lemba-lemba* or tree of submission, and the *ntontozi* or tree of life.

Dedication of New Birth and Fertility Rites. During the Festivals some societies bring, in procession, the new-born babes of the members to receive the official blessing. The Head is said to blow the spirit of intelligence into the ears of the child. Hence the reproach often heard uttered by disappointed mothers of dull children, "Did not the Priest blow into your ears?"

NKAMBA women celebrate both death and life in a ceremony that includes the placing of newly-carved images on the graves of relatives, and the examination of the physical condition of the younger members. Those found in a certain state are at once introduced to the first of a series of protective ceremonies, that begin with the time of fœtation and continue through the birth period and puerperium to the day the child is weaned, a matter of four to five years to some Negro mothers. Similar ceremonies are known to many societies, differing only in point of detail. The expectant mother of CHIBADOS is decorated with "the strange mediums of her fond hopes, sponsorial trappings encircling her shoulders, breasts, back, neck, and legs. In front of her are placed four pots containing fish, fowl, goat, and reptile. The pots stand within a circle of forest creeper, forbidden space to all save the priestess and her odds and ends of mystic paraphernalia. Groups of children, ten boys and five girls, or seven boys and three girls, chant during the ceremony to the beating of the drums. One strong, healthy, fat boy is placed apart from the others and well within view of the girl for whom the ceremony is held, he being chosen to symbolize the sort of hopes she expects will materialize." The EBERE girl is placed against three calabashes of food, and three portions are taken from each vessel and placed on a firestone.

She must not look to see what has been taken, but kneeling, and with her hands behind her back and with closed eyes, she must eat the food from the stone. This is done three times during twenty-four hours, at dawn, at midday, and at sunset.

Purification Rites. At the new dawn, the first duty of the Ekkpo-Njawhaw and the Owu-Ogbo officials is to make a sacrifice for the sins of the members. White and black goats are killed, and as the members pass they are sprinkled with the blood in token of cleansing. At the Odwira purification, libations of rum and other fluids are poured upon the ground as a propitiation. The stool or throne of the Head is "washed," and afterwards smeared with gold-dust and frankincense and myrrh, the triple emblem of omnipotence. The ceremony includes the public purification of the Manche of the Ga people of James Town, who then makes a present of a log of wood to the British local representative, and holds a public reception "to which in recent years many European and African ladies and gentlemen, besides the various Mantsemei and their people, are invited."

Purification rites are common to most of the West Coast societies, the medium of the "washing" being generally a fluid; but Tuntu uses fire. The members, hatless and bootless and dressed in white, make their offerings and perform their ceremonial dance, and then commences their purification. Four members of the family that have for many generations been the guardians of the society "medicine," and who rank as priests, and are expected to be pure in living so as to be able to be faithful to their trust, carry the *kontogi* from its shrine into the midst of the people. They then each take a piece of the medicine in one hand and a lighted torch in the other, and pass the flame over their naked flesh. As long as the medicine is held the fire cannot harm them. This they prove by smearing the torches with medicine

and throwing them on to a thatched roof, or smearing the medicine on the thatch and then attempting to set it on fire. After exhibition of the potency of *kontogi*, the members file before the priests and are purified by having the flame of the torches passed about them.

Harvest Festivals. These are also common, and a description of one will suffice for all. The Homowo Harvest Festival commences sixteen weeks from the time of ńmā-dumo, seed-sowing, and is therefore a little variable in date. The officials plant a special kind of grain in a field beyond the Korle lagoon, outside Accra, and the harvesting of this is a special part of the festival. There are yam feasts and days and nights of dancing. The members daub the sides and lintels of the doors, gates and porches with red earth. "From the early hours of the Saturday morning a great feast is held consisting of *kpokpei* and palm oil and a fish called *tśile*. Eating and drinking is the order of the day, and the next morning, Sunday, a great lamentation in remembrance of the dead is kept."

A marine festival is the principal one of the Oyeni year. It is held about Harvest time and on a Tuesday, that being the Day of *Nai*, the greatest of the sea-gods known to the Ga-speaking peoples of the Gold Coast, and, consequently, the day when no fisherman owning allegiance to that god would think of working. In the morning a special food, *fotoli*, is prepared and carried in procession to James Fort, headed by the Priest carrying a torch of millet stalks. There the people solemnly march around the bastion, wherein lies the grave of the founder of the society, halts being now and then made for the pouring of libations of rum. As they march they sing, *Moi bi egbo, amenyewo, kwasia min nye wo* (Moi's son is dead, they hate us, fools hate us). A tithe of the food is thrown into the sea, to satisfy

Oyeni and the rest of the sea-gods, another dish is reserved for *Gbese Oyeni*, a minor deity ruling over the Ussher Town portion of Accra, where the Gbese or Kinka reside, and the rest distributed amongst the members. Then the procession is reformed and visits all the rocks and lagoons and hills dedicated to the gods of the district. It returns to the Priest's house, singing, *Esa nyanyana kwe beni esa nyanyana Adole Mole bie sa nyanyana* (It is good to wear nyanyana, i.e., bindweed; look how fair it is to wear nyanyana; nyanyana suits Adole Mole's daughter). In this song they preserve a legend to the effect that an early priest of the society, one Moi, lost his son, whose betrothed was Adole Mole's daughter, on the dawn of a festival. The members thought that sorrow would stay the bereaved father from proceeding with the ceremony, but that year it was grander and more elaborate than ever before. Many of the chiefs of the district attend the festival, most staying on to the next day, when a kindred ceremony is celebrated in honour of *Sakumo*, the god of the river of that name.

PROCESSIONS

During the festivals processions may be seen all the time. They are held with reason or without, for work or play, to marshal the members to some ceremony or display, to show respect to the memory of the dead, to pay honour to a promoted member, to gather the novices or to bring them back from the bush, or even for such slight duties as gathering firewood or drawing water. Especially is the day before the retreat, or the puberty school opens, a day of processions. And there is now rejoicing because of them, for the day is gone when non-members, especially women, were punished with mutilation

or death for staying their daily toil to look at a passing society show.

The processions are often elaborate and well organised. Some are of such length that they take several hours to pass the village. They are often cut up into sections, according to importance, that of most dignity coming into view last.

Poro Powa.

The routes chosen are mostly roads leading east.

The section including the novices appears first, the boys or girls being in charge of junior graduates and minor officials. A host of relatives and friends swells this section into a considerable gathering. The novices are hidden from the public eye by coverings of greenery, mats or skins or native-cloth. Some may be masked. The Poro *powa*, novice-mask, is of wood, plate-shaped. That of the Ngi boy is a carved wooden mask quite un-Negroid in features, having a long straight nose and narrow celestial, aligned eyes. It is surmounted by a wig of white plantain-fibre.

Babende Dancing Mask.

The section including the recently promoted members may follow. In this most of the processionists will be disguised in home-made masks of grass, leaves or plastic clay, and reed and fibre petticoats. An attempt may be made to beautify some of these disguises with blossom or gay creeper, and if the general effect is tawdry a few may be seen who wear their cheap finery with a grace that transforms it. Some will have covered face, limbs

or body with coloured clays and washes, each hue or combination of colour conveying its own meaning to the initiated. The old tribal marks may be painted on cheek or brow, or the mark of the society. Circles may be put around the eyes to avert the glance carrying misfortune to friends, or about the mouth that all the words spoken may have the effect of benedictions. The paints used will have been mixed with secret lotions of tremendous efficacy, perhaps with the milk from the breast of a young mother or the blood from the umbilical cord of a new-born babe.

On the other hand this section may be an evidence of degeneration through the influence of pseudo-civilisation, as seen in the processional dress of some of the ADAMU members, who hood themselves with shawls, cloak their bodies with blankets, rugs and sheets, and top the whole with billycock or cloth-cap, stetson, straw or ruffled topper, or an African up-to-date fashion of store millinery.

The following section may include the "entertainers," a band of performers hired for the occasion. These, headed by the barbaric noise of amateur musicians, move slowly amid the whistle and shout and cheer of the hoarse, admiring crowds. Buffoons with weapons of bladder or cow-tail clear the way for the dancers in their motley, shaking rattles. There follow mimics and tumblers, contortionists and merry-andrews, who gyrate about the road and lead an ever-increasing crowd of riotous youth from the villages, who sing and clap and try to help on the fun by attempts to copy the agile antics of the professionals. Some of these latter have

Ikung Festival Head-dress.

reputations that cause their services to be very expensive. The Angola men hired for the MUKANDA festival are experts in ritual dances, are paid as much as twenty shillings, or its equivalent, a day, and take journeys of many days on the road to fulfil their engagements. Others may be clowns who walk on stilts (French Congo) or wire-walkers (Liberia) or hammock-dancers (Sierra Leone). These last perform body- and limb-contortions whilst precariously balanced on grass hammocks slung from poles, twenty to thirty feet above the ground. Now and again this section will halt to allow the performers to manifest their skill or to give the dancers opportunity for some quick measure or some fragment of comic or dramatic effort, as if in advertisement of the more complete performance that is to take place elsewhere later in that day.

The improvised masks seen in this section are often native caricatures of local European officials.

In the processions of the women's societies there may be a section made up of a band of singers and musicians.

The most important section includes the councillors, the officials, and the Head and his Deputy, guarded by those who have attained to the highest degrees of the society. All these will be in costume. EGUNGUN officials may wear long robes with peaked hoods, slit for sight, like the garb of the misericordia fraternities of the Roman Catholic faith, and PORO dignitaries may be in like robes but shaped at the head in inverted, equilateral triangle fashion. The TONGO-PLAYERS appear in leopard-skin caps, that have large side-flaps to hide the face, and zouave-cut jackets, with shorts and gaiters of the same material. Bits of this skin will also be about their elbows, wrists and ankles, and the leopard's tail, with bell attached, will be hanging from the back of the jacket.

The *Dibia* of Ayaka are completely hidden in cloth suits that fit loosely about the body, covering even the feet and hands, and looking like woollen jumpers with connected trousers. The portions encasing the hands are prolonged by many-coloured tassels. They are made of country-cloth, the criss-cross pattern being stained into it with yellow clay. Round the ankles are fetish bands, and similar ornaments are worn as a girdle. The head is a wooden mask, white of face, and may be topped by a single antelope-horn; a relic, it is said, of the belief in that auspicious animal the unicorn. The men of *Egwuwu* rank wear over the suit voluminous kilts of palm-stem, and the *Ejelle-egwu* have cane flounces that hang from the neck instead of the waist.

The opposite sex may be counterfeited in dress, as when Mawungu women appear in borrowed male attire and Ekongola men walk abroad in the garments of their wives and sisters. The Musubori women wear trousers. This disguise, a survival of the ritual of the fertility cults, reminds one of the exchange of garments in the Phœnician worship of Astarte.

The head decorations range from the little conical caps of Babende and the red cotton night-caps of Ekkpo-Njawhaw to the giant constructions made of feathers of Chibados, or those of the bulk and weight also the pride of the Bweti members.

Ikung, like the Dukduk of the Bismarck Archipelago, has a procession of decorated canoes along the river, followed by aquatic sports.

DANCES

After sundown, in a bush clearing or on the wide road before the house of a chief, the public dances of the societies are held. Grouped conspicuously

amidst the spectators may be the district king and his attendants, and the masked officials who, presently, will themselves join the dancers. Somewhere in the midst a great fire blazes and sparks and smokes. Beneath the branches of the trees the great throng of onlookers can be dimly seen.

The Champion may open the proceedings by reciting the names of those who are to commence their initiation on the morrow, giving details of their families and of their ancestors who were worthy members of the society. Or the Messenger may ask formal permission of the king or paramount chief for the holding of the puberty school. Or the Herald may declare the titles and honours of some famous dancer imported for the occasion. There follows a march of the performers, round and about and in and out of the flickering light and shadow of the fire, continuing as if the parade was to go on for ever, until the spectators show their impatience—and the first dance suddenly commences.

It is a mimetic dance, portraying the life of beast or bird or fish. They are SINDUNGU men. One is acting the part of a leopard and the others are its hunters. Not a detail of that hunt is left unacted, not a wile of the hunted and not a stratagem of the hunters is missed. They are painted in glowing colours, the leopard-man with spots, the hunters as if their bodies had been torn by the beast. When the quarry is finally slain, he is crowned with "the cap of the chief," as if he were a real leopard. There are a few ANKOI girls dressed to act the part of bush-cats. They run and dart and swerve through the undergrowth. The rest are the hunters (sometimes these are men "borrowed" from a neighbouring male society) and these race and pounce and follow with shouting and laughter. Then all return to the open space and the firelight, there to exhibit to the spectators what has been so dimly seen in the

gloom. They are BUTWA youths in the "Crested Crane" dance, or MUNGI men in that of the "Makua Fowl," and they strut and strain, cluck and crow, scratch and run round with one wing trailing the dust, or they are OKONKO men in the "Guinea-fowl Dance," beginning with slow rhythmic movement, an unconscious swaying to the music, followed by the working of every muscle in their bodies. And then the imitation. They suddenly sway forward and hop about, pecking and scratching, with head held sideways, or lowered, or erect, flapping and circling, rushing to supposed food, cowering from suggested hawk, ruffling before the "hens" their partners, and doing all with amazing fidelity to the copied originals.

They are either EGUGU, KONGCORONG, OFIOKPO men, LUBUKU women or YASSI girls, and they are performing a snake dance. Not like those made familiar by writers about Voodoo rites or the customs of the Moquis Indians; not by carrying live snakes, but acting the life of the snake elaborately and cleverly performing the windings and writhings and progressive movements of the creature. Their nude bodies are decorated with spots or streaks, or they have from shoulder to thigh a tight meshwork of fibre and native cotton. They stand in a long line, bodies close together, arms stretching over each other's shoulders. They sway and stretch in the firelight. They stoop, arms still linking one to another, and bend until their knees are upon the ground. They sink lower; now they are at fall length on the ground, their connecting arms have slipped from shoulders to waists, and they move like that. The long, undulating length squirms through the undergrowth, the shining oiled and painted bodies cunningly, without seeming effort, progressing towards the shadows. There it seems a nameless, menacing thing, but, presently, as it again reaches

THE LUBUKU SNAKE DANCE

the edge of the clearing and crosses the zone lit by the fire, it becomes a continuous silhouette of infinite and fascinating grace.

So is the Spear Dance of Kongcorong. Six muscular men stand in line and sweep their weapons in semi-circular movements in front of them with a curious flicking action, then move obliquely away. Another six take position and give a similar performance. Then another six, and another, until the number of the dancers is complete. The original six commence a new movement, twirling their spears around their heads in so rapid a fashion that the eye tires in the attempt to follow it. This is copied by the other groups. The third expression of their skill is a rapid cut and thrust, as if the weapons were swords, to the right and left of the body, arm almost horizontal. Whilst this is being done the men gyrate and advance as they turn. Rank after rank follows, until all are thrusting at invisible foes and twirling giddily whilst advancing towards the centre of operations. Then from a column of six they form into line, advance with fair alignment, turn left, and in succession, as each passes what might be called the saluting base, thrust their spears into the ground. Each movement is graceful and sure. The points of the spears are deeply bedded. The stems quiver a moment and then are still. There is now a line of men, and in front of them a line of spears. A shout. The spears are plucked from the ground. A shout. They are bedded again with effortless-like grace but not a blade seeming to miss the original hole. Again the men recover their weapons, and move, this time following each other in a swaying, dancing line, and gradually circling until the leader is closely following the rear man. A shout. The circlers halt, the spears slither from their hands; there is a circle of upright spears inside that of their owners. Again and again this may be done. Then

the pattern is changed once more, the spear shafts forming a wedge pattern, or any other pattern that may seem to be suggested on the spur of the moment to the leader. All the time the excitement of performers and spectators has increased. It becomes a frenzy. In the final movement, when the dancers sweep towards the onlookers, flourishing their spears, uttering great shouts, advancing and stamping their feet heavily, the assembled people appear panic-stricken. But the dancers have only charged to—run away again. Once more they charge towards that breathless crowd, and, as they reach the people, fall in lines as if dead. And there they lie, hard-breathing in sheer exhaustion, amid the long-continued applause of their admiring friends and neighbours.

The women of KATAHWIRIBA are dancing. They march round and round in a column of threes and fours, long white brushes of buffalo and horse tails in hand, and sing an old Ashanti song. "Our husbands have gone to war: war has taken them far: may they have the victory: may they sweep their enemies from their path, sweep their enemies, sweep their enemies, sweep their enemies from their path as we sweep this dust from before us." They form into line, advance, dance, and sing again. They run forward and backward, leap aloft and sideways, vault over each other, mix and unmix. They are showing how the warriors fight, and they brandish their brooms as if they were war weapons. Then the leader steps out of the ranks, and, like the Roman warrior chosen to tell the deeds of the legion, recites the story of a fight, legendary or historical. The others, meanwhile, keep up a shrill, unbroken, cicadic noise, raise prolonged shouts or emit a drone broken at intervals by striking the throat with the hand. The "solo" over, they mix into a mêlée once more, now appearing to be a leaderless rabble and now

orderly divisions, advancing, retreating, charging, and running away, until the dance ends. Their men of KATAHWIRA have a similar display, as have also AFA, IKUNG, KONGOLD, and BELLI-PAARO. The performers of this last society carry branches of trees, and their advance being like that seen by Macbeth's messenger: "As I did stand my watch upon the hill, I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought the wood began to move."

NDEMBO members are performing their *Kabindu* and *Ekinu* dances. They are in a great circle that narrows and expands continually. The BWETI in their *Nloko* dance also do this, and then, turning right, follow each other, circling all the time, marching, jumping, hopping, bounding, and repeating this continuously, hour after hour. The *Ihomo* dance of EBOMICI is a kindred performance. A KAMBONBONKE edition of it is roughly like the old English game of "Sally Water," the dancers forming line and pretending to be warriors, then forming circle and moving round whilst selected members inside the prancing circlers act little dumb charades of love and marriage and domestic life.

The young people of KANGAR form lines, one of boys, one of girls, and for some time advance towards and retire from each other, all the time posturing and lifting first one leg and then another, and hopping forwards and backwards. The SINDUNGO adults have opposing lines holding sticks, and as they advance or retire, or turn right or left, they strike at each other's sticks, in much the same way as do the morris dancers. In this the sexes may be opposed. The dance of the TONGO-PLAYERS resembles the *Salii* of the ancient Italians in the posturing of the two lines, the marching together in procession, and the continued posturing and marching. A SEMBE display has movements akin to those of the Barn Dance, the end numbers crossing and returning, but each move-

ment is regulated by beat of drum and protracted by much posturing. The dancers will now and then break line to rush to the drum and themselves thrum out new commands.

The EGBO *Nsangu* dance is full of tricks. The crowd of performers gyrate about men doing balancing feats, knife-throwing and contortions, and there is a good deal of musket firing.

The solo performers are all strong, skilful and tireless. An OGBONI man in the *Nsundi* dance will twirl a skin petticoat, and sway his body without moving a foot from the ground, for long hours. A BUNDU *Mama* will bound out from the ruck of her companions and stand conspicuously motionless and waiting. At the first throb of the drum she will lift her arms and stretch upwards, then bend and reach down to her toes. Her waist begins to oscillate, at first slowly, in gentle tremor, then in ripples. These spread to bosoms, back, and buttocks. They change to quiverings, to shudderings, to a convulsive movement so powerful that "supporters" have to keep her on her feet by the strength of their outstretched arms. Faster and faster rumbles the drum and more rapid and violent become the woman's movements, every muscle from head to foot working, until the agony of exertion seems to rend her frame. Then she will change her posture. She will raise one leg until the foot is above her shoulder, clasp the ankle, and begin to gyrate on her heel. Round and round she will twirl, ever faster, her heel wearing a hole in the red earth, her companions stimulating

A Mende Dancer.

her by slappings of limb, gruntings and shouts, until she drops, sweating and senseless. "For a second absolute silence prevails, followed by tumultuous applause. The effect of the sudden cessation of music and motion cannot be described; it breaks upon one with such unexpected shock. The physical strength required for the dance is tremendous. The body movements are extremely difficult, and would probably kill a European. The whole anatomy of the performer seems in danger, and it is a marvel that the internal machinery is not completely thrown out of gear."

Although toe-balancing is never seen, these dancers might vie with the European and American ladies of the ballet in rotary movement, gymnastic agility of limb and nautch-like swaying. The skirts may be of fibre or hide, or made of animal tails (even those of elephant are used) but they are flirted and twirled as if of gauze. The Bweti and others balance head-dresses of great weight and bulky proportions, tall feathers or foliage or structures of hair and clay and ornament (some of precious metals and stones) and yet are able to twist and turn so rapidly that the eye of the spectator tires as it tries to follow the movements.

Bweti Dancer.

They are expert in keeping themselves in splendid physical condition. They may not, like the Russian *Skoptsi*, gain perfection of spirit by discipline of body, but they do gain perfection of performance through discipline of body. They bear, with or without drugs, incredible fatigue. The writer once saw a Poro dancer burst from the ranks, his mighty

torso and limbs glowing phosphorescently with "medicine" (the making of which is a closely guarded Temne secret) and commence to leap over the crouched forms of the drummers. Backwards and forwards he jumped, clearing twelve to fifteen feet and three to four in the air at every bound. Now he seemed a vaulting luminous cloud amidst the shadows, the oil flaming about his body, and then he was a polished, black, carven figure. Then, again, as he neared the firelight, he seemed part darkness and part flame. He leaped, he ran, he swayed, he postured, he contorted, never hesitating, never tiring, never stumbling, a giant of magnificent muscular power who was apparently as fresh at the end of the long performance as he had been at its beginning.

DANCE COSTUMES

There are special dancing masks and costumes. The MUKANDA dancers wear masks of leather trimmed with shells. Those of JOOSAI are skulls of bulls and antelopes, the dance performed suggesting that of the Horn Dancers of Staffordshire in being a party of people pursued through the village by others bearing whips. The AYAKA members possess elephant skulls that are worn in the dances. The OVRA dancing mask is a carved gourd, supporting a spread plume of feathers and fibre. That of BABENDE is of wood, surrounded by an elaborate "frill" of some textile material. NAFERI women wear "dancing veils" in the same manner as do the Girara women of New Guinea. CHABADOS dancers

Ovra Dancing Mask.

are encased in fibre costumes that make them look like a series of bundles of twigs. The head is hidden in one bundle, above which stand two crossed twigs, and the arms and legs are hidden in smaller editions of this decoration. There is a stiff corselet of woven fibre and an outstanding skirt of twigs and leaves. Bweti dancers are in costumes of feathers and green leaves, the head-dresses sometimes being of eagles' plumes. Around the waist and legs are bells. Bundu women and Mungi and Poro men wear complete suits of netted native cotton, that of the Kameruns men looking like, in the upper part, a football jersey, and that of the Temne men supporting a large waist-hoop, from which descends to the ankles a cascade of palm fibre. Iban-Isong women dress as males in some of their dances, and plaster their hair about their cheeks and chin like beards. Katahwiriba women wear a short, full skirt of the ballet pattern, decorated with ribbons. Their hair is piled to the height of from fourteen to twenty inches, and adorned by feathers and blossoms. The Ngi head-dress is a fantastic mound of hair and fat, studded with showy buttons and beads, also beans and shells. The skirts are short grass ones, so full at the back that they stand out like bustles.

Mungi Costume.

Some wear girdles of glittering pods, and necklaces of every kind of bead, natural and manufactured, or of the beaks and claws of hornbills; they also don a cuirass of skin or a corset of rope, a doublet of hide, or brigandine jackets studded with metal, farthingales of bamboo, reeds or grass;

also sashes of snake-skin or skirts decorated with snakes worked in brightly-coloured wool or thread, picturesque adornments of wild sodom apples, caps made from complete guinea fowls, others with stuffed parrots mounted above, or complete costumes of ostrich feathers.

CHAPTER VII

INITIATION

Sacred Enclosures—Rounding up the Novices—Society "Death"—Society "Resurrection"—Adult Initiation—Circumcision and Excision—Vows of Allegiance.

The initiation of members usually takes place in a "bush school" or "puberty school" held in a "sacred enclosure" in the bush.

These "schools" or "retreats" may be held annually or at periods varying from three years to seven. They differ in duration, that of BUTWA being three weeks; EGBO, a lunar month; BORI, forty days; ORO and PORO, three months; BUNDU and OKONKO, also NDEMBO, three to six months, and NKIMBA and others more than six months.

Other business than initiation may be overtaken during the retreats, especially that of the elections of officers and grade promotions.

SACRED ENCLOSURES

The temporary headquarters are bush villages erected by the officials and graduates for purposes of "retreat."

These villages are carefully built and cleverly concealed. Prickly acacia or *a-giraffæ*, camel thorn, or *etanke*, elephant grass, may form a wall about them; or they may be left un-walled, but fence or

no fence the village remains inviolate from the uninitiated. They are "sacred." All-powerful tabu is their sufficient guard.

Their erection causes little or no comment in the chosen district, in fact, their presence is ignored, or a pretence to that effect is kept up. No one will willingly discuss them, and, if the local inhabitants are pressed to explain their presence, a shrug and a gesture will be the only reply. You can never get a BUTWA initiate to say he has attended any gathering within them, and, although they have been built within sight, or hearing, of his own house, he will speak and behave as if he had never been near nor intended to do so, and as if he knew neither their appearance nor their purpose.

If the traveller does not wish to insult the places these people consider 'holy' he will accept the answer, and choose a fresh topic of conversation. If he is one of those who refuse to turn aside without inspecting all that attracts his attention he should, at least, remember that good manners are as desirable when visiting the holy places of primitive peoples in the wilderness, as in visiting a cemetery or a cathedral of his own land.

Poro "Kana" containing hidden entrance and guarded by a masked sentry.

One path alone is used for access to the sacred enclosure, and only those sure of their welcome use that path. Somewhere across it is a gate, or a

A SP'MO SACRED PLACE.

series of gates, guarded by alert graduates and minor officials, most of them armed; the "police" of the societies.

The gates, as well as the path, are works of care and time and a great deal of skill. The outer gate of Poro is known as a *kana*. It is a great palm-frond screen built up against dense bush foliage, and embellished by flowering creeper and branch of blossoming bush. Within it is the tiny *kamela* opening, through which all entering must grope their way. That of Ndembo, called *mpanzu*, is a tribute to the patience and skill of the Bakongo weavers, and that of Nkimba is of woven fabric gaudily painted. Invariably these gates face east, as do most African house-doors.

Inside the gate is a little space, where stand some of the inner guards. Here matters of uncertainty may be decided by officials, for passwords are tricky things at best of times, and when they are frequently changed they may become as difficult for the sentry as for the initiate to remember. And some of the societies, as do the Molly Maguires of Pennsylvania, change their passwords and code of signals at each meeting and at each retreat.

Poro asks riddles as passwords, such as "Could you root up a palm-tree with your hands?" and "Can a basket hold water?" The sentinels of Andomba and Ebere sing a strain of a song, omitting some line that the applicant for admission must supply. Or there may be a "missing word" test, a sentence repeated lacking certain words that must be at once supplied. Or a posy of flowers must be presented, the bunch containing none but the requisite blossoms. An Afa elaboration of this is a bunch of blossoms, each representing a word, that spells a sentence spoken by an official, and Iban-Isong demands from its members a particular blossom that completes a flower-sentence known to

the officials. Members of KINKI have to bring to the retreat some article for the completion of the ingredients of a secret package in the keeping of the Head, and a variation of this is found in the applicant having to name the contents of a bundle held before him. AMPORA uses bits of sticks, held half-hidden in an official hand, the test being the declaration of their number, or by saying how many are shorter than the others.

On the further side of the first gate begins the "sacred way," a path of twists and turns, tunnels and cul-de-sacs, such as are only known to experienced African maze-makers. Those walking along that way do so at their own risk. They must go warily, here crawling through darkness made by woven walls, there having to choose between several turnings, and again, being reduced to diligent and often painful search for secret guiding signs observable only to the elect. They may also have to pass several guarded gates. PORO builds four along its sacred way. Visitors certainly will have to pass worrying and menacing things. There are tripping things, tearing things, choking things, frightening and terrible things along that path.

The Snake Tree.

The pilgrim passes through avenues of symbolic figures. These may be the ceremonial masks, to which he has grown accustomed, mounted on sticks or piled stones. But there will be others, ingenious constructions for which the wit and wisdom of the

officials have been responsible. Clay acroliths, moulded about wooden frames, of deities, mostly ill-disposed towards humans according to their looks, and of other awe-inspiring denizens of worlds beyond the knowledge of ordinary men. Clay dragons and unicorns, or snakes and crocodiles. Serpents of piridigi creeper (that so resembles python that many an unwary traveller has, at sight of it, been shocked into flight) and branch of snake-tree, each one so fashioned and poised as to be absolutely true to life. Also crouching leopards and kindred ravenous beasts, lurking in the gloomiest patches of the bush, add their quota of terror to that of all the rest.

The Pa Lokko Palm.

The site of the village itself is probably determined by utilitarian necessities, but it may be built about some tree regarded with reverence in the district. These "sacred trees" are not objects of worship. They are, for some reason best known to the local people, fetish trees, that is, trees considered suitable as the repositories of fetish objects. Thus has the African solved the problem of what to do with the fetishes of his dead. He puts some on the grave or in it, and the rest he hangs upon a sacred tree. The tree so used may be aloe or baobab, blood-plum (*hæmatostaphia barteri*), kapok, tamarind or any other. There is no virtue in the tree itself. Or it may be some growth conspicuous as a freak, like that barren oil palm at Pa Lokko in Sierra Leone (Waterloo

district) that thrusts upward, instead of the orthodox single stem, eight stalwart branches, that break from the trunk about six feet above the ground. Around some such trees as these the village may be built (the palm just mentioned has been put to this use by the Koya members of PORO), and at its foot will be placed a miniature hut for the keeping of the sacred possessions of the society during the retreat.

In appearance the village is one of booths, as were those built by the Jews during the Feast of Tabernacles. In the midst stands the temporary council house, sometimes built with the central tree as its kingpost and sometimes beneath its shade but self-supporting. The *kamehra* of PORO is large and carefully erected. In some districts its walls are open arcades, in others thickly woven lattice-work. The thatch rests upon palm and bamboo that are left higher than the walls, thus leaving high window-spaces. Inside are benches for the councillors and the officials, each seat having behind it a wooden effigy of some famous past member, or that of the society's guardian deity. Over the raised seat of the *Grand Tasso* is a shelf whereon rests, what time he is not wearing it, the skull-piled *tanga-tanga*. Before that seat is a space known as the "Place of Refuge," a stone-encircled spot where rest the divination stones and other objects used in the celebrations.

That of EGBO has upon its walls chips of wood, each, although without name or identification mark, a memorial to the dead. The spirit-tablets of the Chinese were inscribed, and the waxen images of the Romans were supposed to have borne some likeness to those in whose honourable memory they were made, but neither of those memorials, no matter how carefully inscribed or how skilfully made, can have meant more to the man of China or Rome than do these fragments of bark to the man of Africa. Some

are decorated with drawings and furnished with models of birds, beasts and reptiles, drawn, shaped and painted with real skill.

Around the council house stand the huts erected for the accommodation of the visiting councillors and the resident officials. Beyond these are those for the graduates who have joined the retreat, and outside all are the huts for the novices. The buildings may be in groups with wide spaces between, sometimes each group fenced. The etiquette of society precedence and prestige is thus satisfied. Messages are passed from one group to another with all the slow and solemn dignity of a royal progress. If, for instance, the *Grand Tasso* delivers a judgment in the council house, it is repeated by the Messenger to the councillors present, who authorise its issue to the camp. It is then communicated to the representatives of *Binima*, the senior grade, and from them to the *Missi*, and from them to the *Wujanga*, and so down the grades until it reaches the ears of the *Yaya* or Novices.

The "novice huts" vary in shape and material. Some are so small that the single inmate has difficulty of movement within them. In some the inmates are actually bound to the huts, having to carry them with them every time they take a walk. Some of those built for the girls have the floors raised above the ground. They may be of the roughest kind, hastily erected, or made with care, decorated with flowers and carpeted with leaves or aromatic herbs. The *nzo a toko* for the boys and the *nzo a mbongi* for the girls of the Bakongo are raised conical huts like pigeon houses, with a pointed roof and a ladder to reach the entrance. The NDEMBO *vela* or lodges are of bamboo, woven in intricate pattern and elaborate design, and so well executed that they might be placed as garden arbours about an English lawn.

They may be built in rows, terrace-fashion, or in lines of cubicles like those used by the bathers as dressing-rooms; like the birth-houses used in the cult of the Child-God of Egypt, or they may be dropped down on the edges of the enclosure without scheme or plan. They may be surrounded by mud or thorn walls, each hut singly, or the group so confined. But in most cases they are made so as to exclude all light. Some are guarded day and night by a sentry. He (or she) may take charge of a group or there may be a sentry for each hut. Those for the girls are often aged women.

One part of the area of the enclosure is sacred to the Head of the society. The narrow path that connects his house to the council hall is never trodden by other foot than his. When he moves along it his coming is heralded by noise of drum, shrill whistle or by the tinkling of the bells he wears. Then, in the following silence, all throw themselves face to ground and remain prostrate until he has entered the council chamber and seated himself.

The period of retreat over, the village is burned. This is done with "new fire not fanned by human breath," which generally means by a flame caused by friction. When the NDEMBO enclosure is burned, the *Lubwiku* official is ceremoniously tied to the kingpost of the council house. He escapes the flames by virtue of the powers of which he is the honoured custodian.

After every vestige of the village has been carefully destroyed, the site is the perquisite of some selected member, who reaps one harvest from its hallowed soil before it again lapses into bush.

ROUNDING UP THE NOVICES

Early one morning an official, the Champion, the Herald or the Messenger, enters the village to

collect the youths or maidens who await initiation.

The masked messenger of PENDA-PENDA and his servants enter at daybreak, crying unknown words, in which *Juga-Nkah*, the name of their Head, is often repeated. Arrived at the houses they seize some one, generally an old man long a member of the society, who is prepared for and awaiting this act, and carry him off to the bush. After some hours a human nail or a strand of hair, said to belong to the old man, is brought into the village and exhibited. The people crowd to see it, lamenting the loss of their aged friend, their cries of fear and alarm well simulated, for these folk would never dream of spoiling so good a show. The masked men again withdraw, appearing again about sundown, this time carrying a bundle upon a pole. They deposit their burden in the midst of the village, and proceed to plant the pole upright in the ground. That is the first act of this drama of *Penda-Penda Death*. The next manifests how they can resurrect the dead.

A great crowd throngs about the bundle, from which, after incantations by the officials, emerges the old man, alive and very garrulous of his real or fictitious experiences in the bush that day. Forthwith he starts to help the society men round up the novices.

Strings are attached to the pole, and the youths, who have obeyed orders and gone into hiding, are caught and tied by the neck to these strings. They act their part of unwillingness very well. When all are tied up they are made to dance, to gallop fantastically within their confined circle, to turn and twist, backwards and forwards, until the strings are inextricably mixed and shortened, and the youths are half-suspended and half-choked. Still they are urged to movement, by the voice of encouragement of their friends and by stroke of wand,

a length of vine in the hand of an official, until the lads are insensible to either compliment or punishment. Then they are cut adrift and, the strings still about their necks, carried away into the bush. They are now dead to their old life and all it has meant to them.

SOCIETY "DEATH"

NDEMBO neophytes drop as if dead somewhere west of the sacred enclosure and wait until masked men come to carry them to the new village. Their "death" is made to seem the more real by shouts being raised as if of pain, and by the beating of heavy sticks upon the ground. Everyone within hearing is impressed. They lament and mourn, telling each other their sons are dead. They go through the darkness to that "dread" spot, and there around the pools of goat's blood carefully left by the officials they raise the sorrowful cry of the bereaved. *Ndembo Death* is taken very literally. Later that night the officials will parade the village carrying pieces of the goat-flesh, and declaring that it is the flesh of the youths who have been taken away.

NKIMBA candidates are drugged, the work of the medicine being helped by "spinning," a swift turning about of the boy until he falls unconscious. BUTWA youths drink *malawa*, a special society brew of highly intoxicating beer, and then are made to dance until with alcohol and excitement they become unconscious.

AYAKA officials cooee from the bush to announce their coming, the cry being repeated at intervals until answered by like calls that appear to come from every part of the forest. Then they creep from their hiding and range themselves under the trees nearest the village, there to wait until the blood-curdling moanings of the society's bull-roarer is

heard. At the sound all the villagers hide themselves, and all fires and house lights are covered. The officials march forth, silently, for are they not "visiting spirits"? and are there not society penalties prescribed against a word being heard or a laugh being raised, or even a cough? In the darkness and in the silence the youths are taken, and soundly beaten, and, insensible from pain and terror, carried away.

Kufong clash knives as they dance madly about the novice, pretending to strike at him until he swoons from fright.

They are carried away feet first, as a corpse is carried. Kongcorong smears the neck with the blood of a fowl in pretence of a cut throat. Afa, Butwa, Dubaia, Eyo, Kangar, Mungi, and Naferi smear blood on the body, in pretence that the heart has been taken out. Poro compels the taking of *tchlang*, a snuff, *torma*, a herb to chew, and *boruma*, a medicine to drink, so that spirit, mind and body may all be slain. Bundu whiten the body with chalk and Nkamba with pipe-clay, that the appearance of death may be complete. Bori shaves its boys and plucks the hair of its girls. Most of the women's societies tease out the pubic hair of their novices.

They are kept drugged, in some instances, several days. Those of Ndembo are laid on a raised platform in the enclosure, nude, to "dry in the sun." They are so kept from nine in the morning till four in the afternoon, for some days. They lie on their backs with a palm-kernel set on the stomach. They are turned over once a day, and the kernel put on the nape of the neck.

They are dead. The dead are buried. So Ayaka rolls them in the dirt, then makes them lie rigid whilst the officials tread them down. Kufong bury in sand and earth. Others in the body of a dragon. Poro in the belly of the presiding deity of the society,

the bodies of the youths showing the marks from the teeth of the mouth through which they were swallowed. NKANDA buries them in filth.

The dead decompose. Of the NDEMBO youth nothing is left save a single bone. MUKANDA claim to rob them of their shadows, to show they now have neither life nor body.

But the spirits are left. They are now after-death spirits. From the drugged stupor the novices wake dully, to find themselves in a realm so strange that even the stories they heard during their village life cannot explain it. Frightened by unknown surroundings, lethargic through strange medicines, their bodies aching with unusual fatigue, without knowledge of the passing hours, penned and shackled, it is easy for these youths and maidens to believe they are now in the kingdom of the spirits. The dimness or total darkness, the new language they hear spoken, the strange "voices" of drum or flute or bull-roarer, all seem unearthly. The raised floors and confined space of their huts, the alarming noises that sound out close to their ears (through cleverly concealed speaking tubes of bamboo or by ventriloquism), the purgatives of *kino*, the gum of the *pterocarpus erinaceus*, and others made from ancient recipes known to the officials, or the emmenagogues of oil of olives, all confuse and bewilder, and keep them wondering. Bruised and sore, and frightened, they huddle in the darkness, their only food medicines or dirty bones. This last infliction, a part of the ceremony of *awlupulu maw* (eating dirt off the teeth of the spirit) of AYAKA, is followed by the noise of fighting. The bad deities, they are told, are trying to get them. And, alas, they succeed. The flimsy huts are smashed in by tearing, raging strength, and the cowering youths are pushed and pulled and pummelled until they actually believe that those ferocious deities have stolen certain of their organs,

and are devouring the same amidst howls and screeches and demoniacal glee.

SOCIETY "RESURRECTION"

The day of their "resurrection" comes at last It is a great day, a day of feasting, of gladness and sunshine.

It is often determined by augury, and, once fixed, can only be altered by the death of a prominent official. It may have to do with harvest, as in ORISHA, or it may be the middle day between winter and summer, as in PORO, or "the day of the change of wind in the dry season," as in GELEDE, or the day when the sun is in "his middle house" (at or near the Equinox), as in ORO.

It is the day of the real opening of the retreat and puberty school, when the graduates arrive who desire a "refresher" course before taking up the responsibilities of a higher grade.

The novices are carried, shrouded in mats or twigs, to the open space near the council house, where the ceremony of the resurrection takes place. It is, in AMPORA, the "child-bed," the place where the babes are born. EGUGU means "risen from the dead," and an official of NKIMBA is *Nyanga*, the New Life. Here the solitary bone of NDEMBO becomes a new body. The KUFONG youth is drawn from his mound of sand and earth by the shoulders. The AYAKA youth is lifted upon a stretched cord. He is blindfolded, and the hands that support him have bones tied to their palms to tell of skeleton assistance. He must cross the narrow strand, as the *maws*, the spirits of the dead, cross on a thread the wide river that separates the worlds. More than that he must do. On the other side of that river is a tunnel through which the after-death spirits must

pass before they can come again into sunshine. It is not a tunnel through the earth, but one through the body of an insect, the tiny insect *abwissi*. This cannot be done without training and fatigue. Therefore many times the youth has to crawl through ever more constricted holes, until he believes he is at last safely through the body of *abwissi* itself.

Old things have now passed away and all things have become new. The clothes in which the novices entered the enclosure are now dramatically burned; dragged round with derisive shout, gesture and taunt, and thrust deep into the heart of the flames.

They are cleansed, oiled, painted, clothed. NDEMBO boys are coated with red ochre, and BUTWA boys with zebra-like stripes. Others with arnetto red or powdered camwood. YASSI girls are spotted from head to foot with round discs of coloured washes. NKANDA wash and oil, and KUFONG bathes the eyes of the boys with *to-puey*, a lotion made from the bark of the cork tree, *musanga smithii*.

CHIBADOS supplies a gown of rapphia, and NKIMBA a crinoline of palm-frondlets. PORO a corset of twisted fern-rope and a short skirt. These two last dresses are put on boys. YASSI has a garment of cotton that fits skin-tight from waist to thigh. NKANDA boys wear nothing but a large wooden comb that is thrust through the hair upside down, the thick decorated part forming a mask over their eyes.

ADULT INITIATION

The societies who recruit their memberships from adults have their own rites of initiation.

Those of ADAMU are conducted at night and in a darkened hut. The oaths taken by the men are said to differ from those demanded from the women. An ANDOMBA novice is kept "buried" for twenty-

four hours, and is "blooded" on resurrection. The Banban adult novices pass through a long probation, disappearing into the bush for certain periods, where they are taught further secrets of the society. The Ebere applicants are said to suffer severe beating before being admitted. Those of Ekkpo-Njawhaw, both men and women, "die" during the initial rite, and those of Epe are said to drink their own blood before taking the first vow of allegiance. The Gelede novices are forced to undergo humiliating ceremonies, and those of Ndito-Iban and Iban-Isong pass through "purifications" that leave them for a time drenched of all vitality of mind as well as of body. Idiong, an aristocratic Nigerian society, difficult of entry, is said to make compulsory probational ceremonies last a full twelve months, and Mborko, another exclusive association, demands obedience to ordeals, lasting some months, that are so strenuous as to cause some of the applicants to become invalids for a time. Ikung and Kwaga, one Pagan and the other only partly so, are alike in having initiatory ceremonies that suggest comparison with some of the rites of the ancient Egyptian birth-cults, as do also some of those of the Temne women's Kinki.

Those of Malanda and Bili can be more extensively described. The candidate of the first is introduced to the society's officials by a member, or members, who acts during the initiation as "guardian." There is a period of insensibility, induced by a secret medicine, from which the candidate wakes to take, whilst still dazed by the effects of the drug, the first oaths, and to make the first payments. These last include a goat, which is killed, and the blood, mixed with unguents, rubbed into the skin of the candidate. There are seven rites performed, seven vows taken, the initiation lasts seven days, and the first degree must be served seven years. The men or women candidates of Bili spend some

time in the council house, to which their food is brought by relatives, who place it outside the house and cover it with big leaves, the purple underside uppermost. The retreat may last two or three weeks, most of the time spent in rites and ordeals, the first including several purifications and the last including the blowing of whistles, the eating of the raw heart of a chicken, beating, tightening a twisted vine-rope about the loins, and being held in the flames of a fire. In the ordeal of eating the chicken heart, which is placed on a stick that is planted in the ground, the hands of the candidate are tied behind his back and he kneels to eat, but is pulled away several times by the officials as his mouth nears it before being allowed to make the meal. It is said that a rare slug, *nanjonanjo*, is also eaten. The society medicine, *dawa*, plays a considerable part in the proceedings. The after life of the members is subjected to many exactions by the officials; the Head, called the Father of the Forest, being propitiated by a present at all important events, such as harvesting fruit, building a house, marriage and childbirth. On returning home, the new members are covered by a mat, and all meeting them on the journey must make a present of an arrow.

CIRCUMCISION AND EXCISION

The rite of circumcision of the boys and the excision of the girls is conducted in most puberty schools some time after initiation. The rite has been known in Africa for more than five thousand years. Its original reason is either not known or has been forgotten. The custom of a few societies, Ndembo, Nda, Nimm, by offering the parts taken away as sacrificial gifts to the gods of fertility, may suggest that in some parts of the West Coast it had once a phallic

MANNEKEH CIRCUMCISION MASK.

significance. Other societies may use it as a primitive aid to cleanliness and as a preparation for the connubial state, an introduction to the full prerogatives of manhood and womanhood.

It still has a great hold upon the peoples of the Coast. Youths belonging to societies not practising it have been known to undergo the rite with the novices of a strange and distant society, and women, sometimes advanced in years, have come from far distances to submit to the operation, for it is still true that one of the most villifying terms that can possibly be used to a woman is to reproach her with the want of it.

Amongst the societies on the West Coast it is rarely performed at any other age than that of puberty.

Preliminary to the performance of it, most of the societies demand the completion of the rite of Formal Forgiveness and the rite of Formal Cleansing.

The Ceremony of the Formal Forgiveness is one in which the parents of the novice assist, for only after they have declared their forgiveness can the Head, or the Deputy-Head, receive the confession and give absolution. In Bori and other Muhammedan societies the *murīd*, neophyte or seeker, makes an initial *'ahd* or covenant, in which he declares he repents of his past sins and will refrain in the future from committing them. The Ogboni boy appears before the council, which, after interrogation, grants him a collective forgiveness. In other societies the Head or his Deputy grants this priestly concession.

It is widely believed that the rite of circumcision would not be successful if confession of sin was not made and forgiveness granted.

Then follows the Ceremony of the Formal Cleansing. This may be a baptism of complete immersion in, wherever possible, running water, or a sprinkling

with a few drops from a calabash. In the cases where immersion is enforced, the water may be carefully rubbed from the body of the candidate by the hands of an official, in a stroking movement downwards from the head, like that practised by a devout Brahmin.

The actual day for the rite of circumcision or excision varies. It may be three or seven or nine days after the opening of the school, or it may be a "fortunate" day fixed by the astrologers.

Guardians, mostly maternal uncles for the boys and paternal aunts for the girls, are appointed to assist at the ceremony, sometimes one to each candidate and sometimes one, or more, to a group of candidates. They are chosen also from councillors and senior grade members. They are supposed to inculcate courage into those undergoing the rite. They are also held responsible for the cleanliness of the patient. At the actual operation they hold the candidate's hands or give him (or her) support in whatever way it may be needed.

On the morning of the appointed day the boys and girls may be bathed and anointed with aromatic gums (acacia or *asli*, the African frankincense) or some unguent considered right by the "doctor" official, and may also be given cathartic medicines of aloes and kindred drugs.

The Oyeni boys have their hands and feet dyed with henna, and are clothed in white caps decorated with yellow designs and tassels and scraps of coloured muslin and paper, also the white gallabiyeh, one of the oldest garments of the world.

Then, with larking and leaping, and much pretence of rejoicing, they march to where the operators await them. In some instances they are carried on the backs of their guardians.

When the ceremony is a religious one, the novices may be taught to pray, "O spirit of the fearless,

help me to be brave without boasting: O spirit of the strong, help me to endure: O spirit of the warrior, help me to bear pain without flinching," or "O spirit of my grandfather, thou wert initiated here: listen to me and answer me, for to-day I also must be initiated, I also must suffer the pain of circumcision: I pray thee help me and guide me through the rite, that it may be successful." The officials and tutors and guardians may join in this prayer, "O spirits of our fathers, we appeal to thee: our fathers knew this pain: this pain is of old: help these thy successors to bear it: help them to be strong: help them to be brave: O spirits of our father, hear our appeal to thee." And away in the village the parents will be, at exactly the same hour, making their petitions for the strengthening of those undergoing the rite, the small brothers and sisters being gathered to swell the group of the prayer-makers, the babies being adorned with wreaths in honour of so important an occasion.

Other and less spiritual aids to bravery, and therefore the more appealing to young minds, are known; anklets and wristlets of approved creepers, often bearing small fetish objects warranted to deaden pain; the boys wearing them on the right side and the girls on the left. These are the gifts of parents and guardians. The Muhammedan boys wear amulets on their foreheads, phylactery fashion.

The actual operation is by sub-incision, introcision, or the triple-cut. The instrument used may be the tightened hair of elephant or wildebeast or the saw-like claw of a large caterpillar, or knives ranging from those of the Stone Age to those of modern Sheffield make. The Poro operators, *Betieli* and *Ayunkoli*, use a blacksmith's knife in a single sweeping cut for a small boy and two for one of larger growth. The Nkimba *Eseka* uses a modern lancet in a quick, skilful, circular amputation. To

these, and others like them, the operation is one of the utmost simplicity. They have a knowledge of surgery, as is proven by their after-treatment of the wound. But to others, like the NDEMBO *Lubwiku* and the NDA *Elongo*, it is a matter of elaborate and impressive ceremonial. The moment must be astrologically fortunate, the moon must be at full or showing its first pale sickle, there must be a magic circle, the patient must be facing some particular point of the compass, and during the cutting there must be, Jewish-fashion, the muttering of an endless benediction. Also the prepuce, instead of being carelessly thrown away, must be tied carefully in some portion of the boy's garment, or buried at a certain hour of the night; covered with leaves from selected trees, or rendered harmless to the late owner by being given to some bird or beast to eat, the while incantations and prayers are industriously continued.

Excision may be simple clitorectomy or may be accompanied by vaginal rupture performed by an official or by an onanistic deflator. Many women believe that if it is not performed child-bearing is impossible.

Great skill is shown in the making of healing ointments from animal fats and herbs, from juice extracted from creepers, berries and fruits like the banana. *Etili* and other medicinal leaves are used as poultices, supported by a palm midrib tied between the legs. Steam baths are used, that of NKANDA being the vapour from roasted hard-skin beans. These are placed in a hole about eighteen inches deep in the ground, over which the boy lies for a time. Grass-stem ash is then applied. Washing is not usually allowed until the sixth or seventh day.

Special fees are paid to the operators, blue pipe beads and fowls or brass rods being among the common payments. Both the operators and their

patients may be masked, and when this is so the masks of the boys, as in PORO and MANNEKEH, are ancient wooden caricatures of after-death spirits.

The operation is customarily held in the bush, but the *Ayenge* of BORI is allowed to perform it in special cases in his own home. In AMPORA the first boy to undergo the rite is called *Batakoo*, and is made responsible for the good conduct of his companions; the last is *Titkabati* (amongst the Mende members), who is the fag of the camp.

VOWS OF ALLEGIANCE

Sometime during the early days of the puberty school the first vows of allegiance to the society are taken. These are often the occasion of much ceremony.

The vows are pledges of faithfulness and promises to keep the secrets no matter what the inducement may be to divulge them. They are made on the sacred, or the most sacred, possession of the society. The penalty for breaking them, that used to be death, is variable according to the power of the fetish; it may be a threat of crippling, as in BUTWA, or that of madness, as in MUNGI, or that of sickness or loss of money or property.

At the ceremony white or black (or both) cloths may be tied about the stem of the sacred tree, and white or black goats and white, black or red fowls slaughtered. (The significance of these colours, and that of blue, in these religious rites has not yet been satisfactorily explained.) The shed blood is sprinkled on the cloth, on the sacred possession, and on the novice, sometimes the last being blooded by the smearing of the forehead with the wet knife of sacrifice, as was done to the boys in the *Lupercalia Festival* before the grotto on the Palatine Hill.

The sacred possession or secret symbol of the societies varies in make and material.

The PORO *borfima* (*boreh fima*, medicine bag) is a heart-shaped leathern bag filled with a mixture of white of egg, rice, blood of red cock, animal fat, and parts of human bodies. It is about six inches long, four to five wide and the same in thickness; is considered very old; has never been opened, according to report, since it was made; is kept in an engraved and painted gourd; and smells like an open sewer.

The NDEMBO *mpungu* is a bundle of chalk, shingle, grit, crushed bezoar stones, feathers and "other things." It is in a bag said to be of human skin. Its name means mighty or almighty, and it is declared to do things that justify the name.

The KATAHWIRA and KATAHWIRIBA *suman* (hidden mystery) is said to be a bag of crocodile skin filled with certain human organs, nails and hair.

The BUTWA *bwanga bwa kalunga* is a duiker horn inside a roan antelope horn, covered by an envelope of red clay mixed with the sticky juice of *mulele* and other vegetable gums, and decorated with human teeth in a close bead-like pattern. The duiker horn is said to contain human flesh, hair, nails, bone and sinew. In the larger horn are animal claws, bits of lion and leopard heart, of feet of elephants, hide of hippopotamus, shell of tortoise, bird bills, eye of osprey, eyebrow of vulture, head of *ngweshi* snake, heart of python, head of puff adder, nose of crocodile, brow of hyena, head of dogfish, and human and lizard gall, a tooth of a field rat, a scorpion, a burned honey bee, a baby's head, a human caul, some soldier ants, some powdered meteorites, some sand from a footprint of the founder of the society, a hair of a dead chief, and a piece of a tree upon which an official of the society committed

suicide. It is supposed to have the properties or virtues of all it contains. For instance, it is said to "strike" like the deadly *ngweshi*, the snake that erects itself almost perpendicularly and springs to strike.

The MUNGI *chipe cha fisoko* is a basket of the like miscellaneous articles.

All the above, and others of kindred nature, are "parent" fetishes. They are beyond any wealth to buy. Only their use is bestowed. But rich members can obtain, for their own private protection, "children" of these fetishes.

Images, generally in pairs and of phallic origin, with or without cavities containing similar "medicine," are used by EGBO, GELEDE, MALANDA, EKKPO-NJAWHAW, and ORO, also BANBAN, SEMBE, and TILANG have shells filled with such substances as chalk, camwood-powder, pepper, and iron filings.

Whatever its shape and filling, the symbol is the power of the society. It has been said that it is as much the *soul* of the society as was the *Golden Stool* that of the Ashanti people. It is the home of the society's guardian deity; his shrine, his Holy of Holies. It is the weapon of the society, and, as such, like the sword that was given a name by its knightly owner, is pledged to the work to which the society has set its hand. And as that sword was broken when in danger of falling into unauthorised and alien hands so these fetishes would be destroyed if there arose danger of them passing from the possession of the societies.

It is on these fetishes that the oath of allegiance is sworn. "An oath sworn on the *borfima* is as binding as was one sworn on the bones of the saints in the Middle Ages. No one dares to break it for fear of the awful consequences which would inevitably follow." That is true of all of them.

The oath taken may be something like this. "I, So-and-So, of Such-and-Such a family and village, swear by this medicine to remain faithful to this society, to be obedient to its officers, to be true to its fellowship, and to aid it in every way demanded of me. If I break this oath, when I go walking may snakes strike me, when I go a canoe-journey may the canoe sink, when I am with friends may my best friend betray me, when I am with my family may the one I love best slay me, when I take (ordeal) medicine may my belly burst. I swear by my liver, my lungs, my kidneys, my heart, my body, my head, my limbs, my genitals, by my blood and by my breath, and by this (the fetish), that should I break this oath I will remain friendless and powerless before my just fate, whatever that fate may be, if of fire of heaven or earth, if of water of heaven or earth, if of man's power or spirit's power, acknowledging the justness of that fate, be it death by a stroke or by a thousand lingering strokes."

CHAPTER VIII

RETREAT LIFE

Society Foods—Ordeals—Relaxations—Lessons—Object and Model—Natural History and Botany—Law and Land Debates—Meaning of Tabu and Fetish—Folklore—Tribal Customs.

The catering for a large number of people living away from the ordinary means of supply is not so great a task in Africa as it would be in some other countries. That may be why only one society includes amongst its officials a Caterer or "Mother of Porridge."

Food may be provided by rich members, as in IDIONG and GELEDE, by the officials, by the relatives of the novices, or by the novices themselves. "Old boys" of the schools may make presents of food, and farmers are known to "plough for their society," i.e., set aside the harvest of some field to provision those in the sacred enclosure. If a BUTWA boy is forced by any circumstance to leave before the school closes he is compelled to provide food for the others during the remainder of the term.

SOCIETY FOODS

Special society foods are known. NKAMBA has its own *potage au gras*, and OGBONI boasts a soup that contains from forty-eight to one hundred-and-two herbal ingredients "according to the season

of the year." The OYENI *fotoli* is a dish of corn-meal, millet, palm-oil, *lalarkabi* (shark), beef or goat flesh, boiled in sea-water and suitably seasoned.

There are also society seasonings, aromatic herbs, peppers, alliaceous bulbs, certain barks (EGBO), and bark-snuffs, like that mixed with *atcha* used by EGUGU. The PORO millet dumplings are eaten with "a society ketshup," and the NKANDA novices have their food savoured with a salt that they make themselves, burning aquatic herbs, filtering the ashes, and obtaining the crystals by evaporation.

Special drinks are also brewed, mostly beers of banana, honey, maize, millet, palm-wine, sorghum, and raffia of palm.

Food taboos may be enforced on the novices, such as those on ground-nuts, guinea-corn, eggs and pepper by AMPORA. Certain fruits are denied them by several societies, and others tabu tobacco, snuff, beer, and vegetables. These disciplines may include the officials. The priests of OYENI must not take salt in any form save that of sea-water. The *Grand Tasso* is denied all prepared foods. The NANAM officials must eat their food in darkness.

ORDEALS

One of the lessons learned by the novice in the puberty school is "the strengthening of the will to endure pain and the ability to endure it in silence." It is by means of "ordeals" that the tutors teach this fortitude of body and courage of spirit.

The ordeals may include hunger, thirst, exposure, and eating unsavoury food, often with hands tied behind the back. This last has a religious significance

A CHIBADOS GUARDIAN

amongst the West Coast peoples, as it has amongst the Malays. NKAMBA girls are driven, grunting like pigs, to the feeding grounds of those animals, where they have to eat offal from the earth without touch of hand. The first meals of the NDEMBO novices are masticated for them (here probably being another suggestion of "new birth") by the officials, who deposit the well-chewed food "with a liberal supply of saliva" on the head of a drum, from which the novitiate must take it kneeling, and with hands tied behind, "eating it all without scruple and without diffidence."

The fire test is a frequent one. KUFONG and other boys have burning brands flourished within touch of face, and many societies compel both boys and girls to leap over or walk through fire. The society just mentioned also makes the lads balance themselves on the sharp edges of hot axes, in a sitting posture or in that of climbing, the latter being an African manifestation of the sword-ladder of the Chinese.

The MASUBORI youth is sent to the cross-roads at midnight, with orders to stay there no matter what happens. The first to try to frighten him away is an official disguised as a *bori*, spirit, the next appears to have but one eye and that glowing and blazing like a fire, the next is a warrior who thrusts at the boy with a spear, the next a magician who drops writhing, luminous snakes on him, and so on, until the test is considered complete. Many novices find themselves thrust into the midst of men apparently desperately fighting, who show seemingly terrible wounds, and who at one moment act as if in the dissolution of death, and in the next are leaping, threatening and using their weapons as if desirous of killing all within reach.

NKANDA boys are not reckoned worthy until

they have passed three trials; *lobo*, the creeping through a trench in which hide threatening men grotesquely clad; *ganda*, another trench, shaped like a cross, in the exploration of which the boys blunder into vessels of goat's blood, and inadvertently pull other horrors over them; and *mete nkanda*, the jumping over and through bushes in which arrows, knives and spears, sharp edges and points everywhere, have been fixed.

Noise being a valuable fetish, a deafening clatter is kept up during most of the ordeals, the idea being that amidst it the novices will forget themselves and their pain and discomfort, just as an injured soldier will forget his wounds and continue fighting in the noise and excitement of a battle.

There are punishments meted out for undue display of fear, such as being kept from the fire, compulsory fagging, being "sent to Coventry," having the face tied up to prevent speech, and starvation. A particularly severe form of the last is the compelling of the hungry to watch the feasting of the others, as in Ayaka, knowing that not even a grain or crumb will drop for them. A more cruel punishment still is the compulsory eating of "thorn" porridge, a mess of boiled grain thickly studded with ugly thorns. With hands tied behind them the culprits are made to lap this up dog-fashion. Those bleeding mouths trying to satisfy hunger are a pathetic illustration of the rigours of the training known in these puberty schools.

Other ordeals have to do with the taking of the society medicines. The Butwa novices have to drink *chibolo*, a compound of certain powdered crystals, the parings from the feet of crocodile, elephant, armadillo, tortoise, scorpion, certain herbs, and dog's dung and human excrement, all boiled together. Whilst this is being drunk a song is sung,

"Oh, come and drink, ye mother's children, come and drink: if any stay away, he's the child of a slave: let him stay."

An ordeal of quite another type is known in some of the Nigerian societies, the novices being given a secret to keep just before their relatives come to the sacred enclosure to see them. If it is successfully kept six others are imparted, and if these remain undivulged the first secrets of the society are taught.

RELAXATIONS

Fortunately for the youths and maidens concerned the whole time of the retreat is not occupied by ordeals.

Ampora *bangans* (probationers) are taught to act the part of officials and councillors in a masquerade that, like the old-time Feast of the Innocents, degenerates often into a hilarious scramble for the garments of dignity, and a general rough-and-tumble to see who shall wear them.

Tilang has a special snuff-taking ceremony that provides good fun; the snuff being sprinkled on hot coals and the boys having to draw the fumes into their nostrils. In more than one school the practical joking has to do with snuff-taking, the dust being mixed with that of red peppers and other pungent stuffs to provide shocks for the unwary and laughter for the others.

The African is a rare mimic, and much of this power is cultivated in the schools. Most of the novices might well be taken for children of that man employed by Emin Pasha who amused the caravan in imitation of his master by asking the names of villages and trees, plants and lakes, mountains, tribes and individuals, and pretending to

record the answers in a hand-made notebook by the aid of a discarded pencil-stub.

They make up a story and act it by mute gestures, in a sort of Roman *pantomimi*, the chorus in the background chanting a soft narration of the plot or description of the acting; or in a wild travesty of dramatic effort they turn tragedy into comedy, melodrama into farce, and heroes and villains into clowns and loons. They reproduce tribal fables and legends in dance-dramas, and amateur plays that recall the *Atellan* farces of Ancient Rome, with all the stock characters complete, the fool, the fat man, the daddy, the sharper, the monsters, the bogeys; the story being related in improvised dialogue. Ekkpo-Njawhaw has a marionette show, with clay figures; these being manipulated by members hidden beneath the table that forms the stage.

Dumb charades are popular, and the subjects chosen know no limit, even the after-death spirits not being immune from these caricatures. Young Africa is not at all unlike Young America or Young Europe in making objects of irreverent amusement the things their elders hold sacred.

They become gods doing kindnesses or ordering punishments, ancestral spirits committing absurdities, medicine men conducting red-water and other ordeals, kings and queens and chiefs receiving embassies, white travellers becoming lost in the bush, official surveyors madly attempting chastisement of unobservant carriers, commissioners presiding over courts, and missionaries holding a service or dispensing medicine. By aid of some simple domestic utensil they become a household, a calabash dish on their head makes them warriors, or placed elsewhere converts them into hunchbacks. A stick becomes every weapon known to them. Yet the "properties" are secondary; it is the play of

feature and action of body that tells the story. Now they are sycophant, now proud; here is a girl becoming a very Tarpeia pleading for bracelets and being buried under shields; and here a boy acts a hairless Silenus bound in floral chains and made drunken to prophesy, or a Tantalus seeking and not finding sustenance, or just a rogue—dissipated but braggart. Every joy or sorrow they know or can imagine, every pride and humiliation, every satisfaction and every disappointment they hasten to express; now swathed in bandages they whine for charity, then, in the joy of the game, forget the intended rôle and plunge into agile contortion, clever acrobatics, and laughable montebankery.

The Okonko girls during their *nkpu* period do no work, and are provided with more food than they can eat. "Some grow grossly fat and heavy, and all exhibit signs of over-feeding, but when on parade they receive honour in proportion to their size, and the fatter they are the more pleased and proud are their future husbands." (The retreat of this society is known as the "wife-making school.")

The boys of Dus are taken journeys through the country whilst being taught tribal traditions and folklore.

Games are played; battledore and shuttlecock with rapphia missiles, and the game of the thirty-two holes containing counters of shells, berries or beads that is known by many names, but is played under the same rules all over the continent. They "follow the leader" with rare patience and perseverance, being praised or blamed as they achieve success or suffer failure. They play their own version of "prisoner's base," all the while singing at the top of their voices. They have a game like that of the English "We are the Rovers," and another like

"Hare and Hounds," in which they chase their tutors as did the Spartan boys their *agetes* on the opening day of the *Carnea*. They play robbers, boatmen, fishermen, barbers, pilgrims, wise men, warriors, hunters, imitate animals from the stately elephant to the chattering monkey and from the somnolent hippopotamus to the vital, elusive snake, and march round the enclosure as mock serenaders, raising "melody" on improvised instruments.

Above all, they dance and sing. Dancing is in their blood. The common salutation is not "How do you do?" but "What do you dance?" AMPORA, AYAKA, BUNDU, EKKPE, IKUNG, and other novices, are taught their duties and responsibilities in songs, most of them chanted in the society language.

LESSONS

The boys are encouraged to become proficient in boxing, wrestling and other athletic exercises, in shooting (with weapons from bows and arrows to modern rifles) and in hunting and other food-providing pursuits. The girls are guided in decorum, the law of hospitality, the meaning of birth and marriage, the decencies, the principles of behaviour (including warnings against loud-voiced disputations) and the responsibilities caused by death of relative and friend.

The mallams of MUSUBORI teach reading and writing, and give memory tests. The murshids of BORI lead their boys through a course of instruction and discipline bearing a striking resemblance to that of the Gnostics with its seven archon-guarded gates. It is known as the *tarīqa*, a path that has many *māqāmāt* and *'aqābāt*, hard and rugged places diffi-

cult to overcome, but ends in the possession of manliness and wisdom. They of MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH meet in frequent session to examine the novices and give advice as to future conduct and choice of profession. In these sessions, as in the *Jemaa* of the Berbers, the Head of the society grants private interviews to the lads, in which he exhorts them to bravery and industry, stimulating them by the memory of their ancestors, and giving them a sense of security by enlarging upon the power of the fellowship into which they have been admitted.

Object and model lessons are given in house-building, cattle-tending, gardening and general agriculture, in mat-weaving, wood-carving, metal-working, in natural history and botany, in the making of nets, pots and charms, and in the stringing of beads and the composition of bead-work.

House building used to be one of the greatest activities of the puberty schools but, like everything else on the Coast, the hand of "progress" is now evident in the sacred enclosure, its erections being the work of professional builders and artists instead of that of the officials.

Mat-making is usual, most novices having to make the sleeping and food mats used in retreat. ANDOMBA make palm-shingles for the roofing of houses, the "tiles" being the great fronds doubled and redoubled, and interwoven to a twelve-by-eight inches size. The money gained by their sale is divided amongst the workers. There is also the weaving of various rapphias into hats and processional finery.

Wood-carving is taught. NKANDA boys make the large combs they wear, some of them being of excellent workmanship and design. AMPORA boys are also notable wood-workers. In some of

the Lower Niger society schools the novices are taught to carve roots and stems into images and dolls. The society staves are often cut and ornamented during the retreats.

The making of the dolls is an industry of both wood-carving and bead-work. YASSI, also MORI and MASUBORI, girls make them from wood, and dress and tend them much in the same way as do their European sisters. These *jou-jou* (as the Mandingo correctly name them) are not often made with limbs. And they are hardly ever seen outside the enclosures.

Retreat Dolls.

Metal working is infrequent in other than the societies founded by blacksmiths' septs, as AYAKA, but HUMOI and IKUNG teach this craft.

Natural history is not so well taught in the West as in the Bantu societies of the East, but lessons are given in an elementary way. They include toxicology.

Botany is taught, in NKAMBA by journeys for the selection of natural foods, and in its male school, NKIMBA, by learning lists of herbs and their uses, whether edible, medicinal or poisonous, and what are the antidotes to the last. SANDE gives a leaf and sends the girls out to find the tree or shrub from which it has been taken. In this the making of snuffs may be mentioned. Many novices are taught how to select the bark, and prepare, boil, dry, and fan it in obedience to rules established by age-long precedent.

GBANGBANI enforces the collection of specimens of all the local woods, berries, fruits, barks, herbs, flowers, and seeds.

Various forms of gardening and agriculture are made lessons in the schools, and several of the societies assist their young members afterwards in the purchase and cultivation of farms.

Law and Land Debates are held. In them the legal code is explained, both native and engrafted laws; a very complicated and voluminous subject that requires a great deal of explanation, as all those working on the West Coast know. Poro, Egbo and other societies, concerning the land question, teach that there can be no individual ownership of the soil; that all land within the tribal boundary whether cultivated or pasturage, waste, forest or town lots, belongs to the community as a whole, and to them in perpetuity and not to the heirs of the present occupiers; that the individual acquires certain rights by reason of cultivation work, but no right of proprietorship as that word is interpreted outside Africa; that no man, not even a chief, can alienate the land; none can sell it, and that money received for any such transaction is blood-money gained by the betrayal of the people.

Meaning of Tabu and Fetish. They are instructed in the meaning of taboos; why there should be close seasons for certain oil-bearing and fruiting trees, and for certain beasts, birds and fish; why, too, they should not use certain fields or rivers, roads, villages or houses, or why they should have commerce with certain people, and why they should restrain certain human actions and desires.

Many of these restrictions may be due to, or be aggravated by, what are commonly called superstitions, such as the custom of restricting, or wholly ruling out, the use of certain words, especially names, as known to Bori, whose women will never call their husbands by their names lest harm come from

the use, and as known to PORO, whose members refrain from mentioning the name of a mother-in-law; but all are not so. Many are decidedly good in a utilitarian sense.

They have a direct bearing on the health of the people. For instance, in the old days eating was a discipline rather than an enjoyment. Every mouthful had a moral purpose. To be fleet one had to eat the body of a fleet animal. To be strong one had to eat an animal of strength. To be brave one had to dine off the heart of a courageous foe, whether man or lion. And so on. But those days are passing. The people now eat because it is natural and pleasant so to do, and therefore are liable to overeat. Hence the tabu on certain foods. The native doctors say, "Don't eat such and such," the tabu including foods being indulged in to the danger of health. Or they say to an ailing person "Don't go on such-and-such a path," knowing that along that path the offending fruits or vegetables are most easily procured, and the patient by obeying the tabu is probably cured of indigestion or scurvy, or some other disagreeable complaint. Also, by putting places out of bounds the patient may gain what he or she really needs, rest, the confinement to the village, the compound or the house, thus using a simple and sensible way of regaining health and strength. Many societies have stayed the spread of contagious diseases by pronouncing all touching of a dead body ceremonially unclean for a fortnight or three weeks, and by enforcing upon all the mourners ceremonial washings and medicine-takings.

There is also a significant moral element in their teaching concerning the use of fetishes. Their dogma is that these vindicate the right and the true. "Fetishes will never work for the guilty party," they say. The NKIMBA phrase is, "*Nkisi kuma*

A BUNDU TUTOR OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

kadilanga" (that which is fetish will never injure or in any way operate against an innocent person, or, to make it a shorter sentence, a fetish will never justify wrong). An illustration of this is seen in the use of the fetish leaves placed about a farm or a house for the detection of thieves. These are said to blow to pieces and utterly destroy the thief; but the owner of the farm or the house will walk upon them without a qualm, whilst the thief will walk long miles to avoid them. Moreover, should the owner make a mistake and set his fetish against one who is not guilty, or if he attempts to use it spitefully, the fetish force invoked will not only *not* attack the innocent, but will turn and smite the owner with the evils he has sought unjustly to induce in the guiltless.

Tabu and fetish may be "symbols of hope misplaced and misdirected," as some aver, but where a rag blessed by a society priest will keep a scoundrel from making a raid on virtue, where an image borrowed from a society house will frustrate the designs of a sharper, where a twig from a sacred tree will keep out a burglar, where a charm containing medicine compounded by an official will ward off the highwayman, where an injunction will make for sanitation and good health, and where any heathen law will help a man to approach and keep any law of the unknown God, there is an element of good the usefulness of which is undeniable both as a factor in the upward trend of the Negro race and as a ground of appeal in directing the race to nobler, truer, and better things.

The breaking of native law leads to the infliction of native punishment, and both still have a more salutary effect upon the native than those brought into the land by white men. The consciousness of having broken a fetish law has driven many Africans to despair, whilst imprison-

ment in government jails leaves them happy and triumphant.

Folklore, that one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin, is taught in these schools. Only the Muhammedan tutors have printed or written records to aid their teaching, but those Pagan have developed remembrance into an art. They can recite complete and lengthy "books" of tribal history and biography. Their saga-songs, lilted to tunes that are the original plantation melodies, embrace the history of centuries. A single poem of the Bakuba people, for instance, celebrates the lives of no less than one hundred and twenty-four kings.

The *Moasidi* of NKANDA might be called the Poet Laureate of his people (Bushongo), and several societies have officers who act as Conservators of tribal legends. These recite the records with or without accompanying music, their efforts often, like those of the Arab reciters in the coffee-shops of Cairo, lasting many hours, any lapse of memory being tided over by ready imagination. KATAHWIRA men and their affiliated women will recite for a whole day without break long screeds of doggerel and free verse. Memory tests are made compulsory in many of the schools, and the youths and maidens are helped to remember by aid of proverb-dialogues and word-games.

Traditions are told concerning the introduction of such things as fire, domestic animals, cooked meals, sowing and reaping, service of drugs, and the use of the hoe, the axe and the gun.

Here is a Batanga story, told in the MALANDA school, of the introduction to them of the use of tobacco. "Lusana Lumumbala went away; so long was he away that people forgot the time, but they did not forget Lusana: was he away five years or ten, who shall say? he returned: he told his

travels: he took from the folds of his dress an instrument: great was the wonder at sight of it: he took also a herb: none before had seen it, for like the instrument it was not of this land: Lusana put the herb into the instrument: he put the instrument into his mouth, put coal thereto, and made smoke and drank it: the people cried, what has Lusana done, for he eats fire and drinks smoke? he answered, it is a magic plant: they ask, does it taste good? it is good, he said: it is the best magic I have learned on my travels: all men should know this plant, especially those who have anger in their hearts, those who quarrel, those who take up knives to kill their neighbours: those who know this plant do not have anger, they do not quarrel, they do not kill: they say, do not these who offend us come from the same sort of womb as we, therefore, let us not slay, let us punish: one drinking of this herb will make them say that, and two will cause them to say, in our punishment we will not hurt overmuch, and those who drink deeply will say, why hurt at all with blows when speech is so much better: then they drink again, and think out heavy words to say: they drink again of the wisdom of this herb, and know that words are at best womanly things: they can be sweet and they can be bitter, but those sweet are best: thus spoke Lusana, with whom his brother, being envious, desired to quarrel: saying, come my brother, sit here in the shade, here is the herb and here is the pipe, enjoy yourself: I will run down a chicken and will buy palm-wine, for this day we hold festival together. The words of Lusana Lumumbala are ended."

They tell stories of the creation of the world, the birth of man and his mating with woman, the cause of the difference between black and white and why white rules and black serves. Long before the

Pagans knew that there were such things as Jewish and Islamic scriptures, and long before Bible and Koran were translated into any African speech, they were telling stories of the Garden of Eden, the slaying of Abel by Cain, the Flood, the Flight from Egypt, and the Translation of Elijah, and they still tell these stories as their fathers told them. Other stories are told in these schools, also older than the Christian invasion of the West Coast, of historical figures who became or attempted to become the saviours of their people; beautiful figures, according to the telling, and strangely like the sublimest figure of all, that of Jesus of Palestine.

They repeat fables like those of Aesop, Reynard the Fox, Beauty and the Beast, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, and like those known to Uncle Remus, with the spider and the tortoise and the elephant acting in the Brer Rabbit hero-way, helped by the clever squirrel, the wise parrot and the benevolent owl against the greedy baboon, the clumsy hyena and the cruel leopard. Stories of beasts thinking and talking as clearly as men are frequent, as are those of beautiful maidens being wooed and won by animal and spirit lovers, animals after the order of the wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus who protect and help and fight for human beings, men and women changed into beast form until the spell is broken by some good and brave influence, and strange guidance-giving eagles and challenging, red cocks, like those of Ygdrasil the world-tree of Odin, which awaken the gods from sleep, put demons of darkness to flight, and herald the dawn of a new-made world for the work and play of the sons of men.

So great is the wealth of traditional stories in West Africa that in one of its larger states, Nigeria, the legends are in groups, and each group is reputed

to contain sixteen hundred and eighty connected stories.

Tribal Customs are explained, taught and enforced in the schools, especially those having to do with birth and death.

CHAPTER IX

SOCIETY NAMES AND LANGUAGES

Society Names—New Language—Society Songs—Illustrations of use.

SOCIETY NAMES

A society name is invariably bestowed upon the young initiate in the puberty school, generally after the ordeals have been satisfactorily passed, the purifications ended, and the initial vows taken. The name becomes a seal to the initiation, a proof that the first grade is reached, and a very satisfactory mark of the new manhood or womanhood.

An African in the course of his life acquires many names. There is his umbilical name, that given at birth by mother or parents or family. There is the one given to him at school, if he attends such an institution, by the missionary of the government teaching staff. There is the one, varying much or little from the umbilical one according to the linguistic abilities of the official, by which he is registered by the civil authorities. There is the "book" name given when he takes employment under white men, this often being a phonetic variation of his clan or totem name. There may be a name adopted at marriage, probably suggested by the spouse, and the one self-bestowed when none of the others seems to exactly fit the opinion the individual holds of himself, and there are the society names; these, as described in the narrative of the Okonko grades, being of progressive numbers according to progressive importance.

The society name first given may be that of a past member, thereby linking the novice to an ancestor, or it may be a term or title that, in the estimation of the tutors, sums up some characteristic or marks the individuality of the youth or maiden. It may also be that of a past tribal hero, or even a variation of that of one of the society's deities. When this last honour is conferred, some diminutive is affixed to the word.

Its bestowal is made the more memorable by the mystery of its first announcement. There are skilled ventriloquists amongst the officials, modern African *Eurykles* who know all there is to know about "belly-talking," or the "voice of the spirit," as it is sometimes called. They can make the command or the announcement they wish known come from the tree-tops, from the passing wind, from the flying bird, from the sleeping amphibian, from the prowling animal, and from the very deeps of the earth. Other devices to astonish the novice they have also. They share the knowledge possessed by the ancient Egyptians in phonetics. Secret, mat-lined tunnels and bamboo tubes connect council house or hut of official to that of the young initiates, through which wind is driven or voices transmitted. Or the tutors may exercise their undoubted powers of mimicry, and speak through the imitated notes of bird or beast. It is said that they also tap out on the hut-wall the morse-like code of words used on their drums.

Therefore, the new name may reach the new owner by strange and hitherto unknown means, and be iterated and reiterated until the novice wakes up to the fact that it is his. His secret name. His first society name. The name never to be divulged to the uninitiated, no matter what the provocation. "A terrible way of teasing a youth is to ask him about his society name, to suggest he has forgotten

it, to hint that it is not half so good a name as the one his mother bestowed upon him, to declare it is a nickname the owning of which does him no credit. His lips are sealed. Burning to defend himself, sure that the mere whisper of the name would be sufficient answer, he yet must deny himself. He is under vow, a terrible vow, a vow that if broken would in dire consequence shatter his universe. The consequence being that he does the only thing he can do; he turns and walks silently away from his tormentors."

The grade names he afterwards takes may be merely elaborations of the first, or they may be expressions coined to mark the added grandeur and honour of the degree.

NEW LANGUAGE

Most of the societies possess an esoteric speech known only to the members, and the ability to speak it is looked upon as a sure sign of membership. It may approximate a language, as those used by Nkimba and Poro, or be merely isolated phrases used in ritual and for passwords, as in Ndembo and Penda-Penda.

Occasionally it is found divided into grade groups of words, making the knowledge of it progressive with the promotion of the member, only those reaching the highest grade thus being privileged to use it in its totality. There are societies that only allow their secret speech to be used by the councillors and the officials.

A systematic study of these tongues, if ever possible, might bring to light many figurative and symbolic preservations from the ancient African languages of the Coast. Indeed, they are often called, when strangers make inquiry concerning them,

KALOKO CEREMONIAL DRESS

the "Old Language" (PORO) or the "Hidden Words" (AYAKA and OKONKO) or the "First Words" (IZYOGA and NJEMBE and UKUKU).

They are mostly (1) combinations of words that have been manufactured to express some society sentiment, or to help along some ritual practice, or to denominate some sacred object, much in the same way as the word "gadget" was created by the English; (2) modifications of the tongues of the tribes the societies influence, created and accepted in the same spirit as were bilingual words by the allied armies during the Great War; (3) inversions, words disguised by artificial letter reversing, composed as is the "back slang" of British costers, cabmen and schoolboys; and (4) archaisms.

An interesting comparison can be made of some of them with *Shelta* or *Skelta*, the old Irish or Gaelic phonetic speech known in England as the "Tinkers' Language," as, for instance, the PORO and MASUBORI *binni*, spirits, a word used in *Shelta* for anything small like a fairy; the BUNDU *granny*, wise woman that is akin to the Tinkers' *granni*, to know; and the ANDOMBA *oseebli* and the *Shelta sweebli*, both used for a short, stumpy boy.

The "Old Language" of PORO is complete enough to be reduced to a syntax. A few specimen words are here given, grouped as above.

(1) *Aban*, initiate; *abankalo*, initiation house, or initiation, or initiates; *abuke*, anything Poro; *akal* and *biri*, signs and symbols; *akanta*, rite or rites; *akumra*, enclosure sentries; *akuso*, implements or weapons; *aporo dif*, Poro bush; *aseba* or *awonko* or *awuni*, dances and dancers; *asuka aban*, graduate; *atumpan*, council fire; *bafe*, huts; *bowi*, armlets or leglets; *bakumabenge*, ornaments; *fari* and *obanika*, enclosure or parts of the same; *gafe*

(horn) used of a *krifi*, spirit; *ebunde* ("men in petticoats"), ceremonial dress; *kamela* and *kani*, palm screen before enclosure and gate in same; *kunki* or *runki* or *runku*, novice dress; *jambe* and *mayambo*, graduate's dress; *ngahomwi*, servant of an official; *oborrka*, the uncircumcised or uninitiated; *osimore*, novice; *re*, official shield, especially the one carried by *Laga*; *tanga-tanga* or *tange-tange*, the mitre of the *Grand Tasso*.

(2) From the Arabic, *murde*, the noise or "shout" made by the members when assembling, and *salkene*, praying field, used for the festival before the opening of the sacred enclosure. From the Mandingo, *obarin* (ancient Bambara for father's brother), used as a title for the guardian of a novice. From the Hausa, *binni*, for the official known as the chief of the spirits, *bori*, as an alternative to *krifi*, and in the words *Mabori* and *Mambori* (anything that moves slowly, like a tortoise) used as titles for the women allowed to act as honorary officials and known as the mothers of the spirits. From the Kongo, *eseka* and *osoki* (the "four-eyed"), used as titles for doctor and magician. (These last words introduce the problem of the kinship or the association between Poro in Sierra Leone and Nkimba in Nigeria. There is a saying, "He who is the servant of *Grand Poro* serves *Nkimba*.")

(3) The society members say *apma setubi* for "palaver finished," the Temne being *ibutes ampa*.

(4) Two words are survivals of the speech of the autochthonous Capez, a tribe conquered by the Temne in the early years of the sixteenth century, *bempa*, sacrifice, and *obolomba* (from *obolem*, Men of Bullom) the title of some of their doctors. Other official titles are archaic Temne and Baga, such as *Tasso*, a corruption of the Baga *Kasi*; *Laga*, from *Raka*; *Soko* (chief dancer or dancer in charge) from *Seki*, and there is also the word *kamegotrun* (enclosure,

council house or men's house), from *kamambwi* or *kemembwi*.

In the NKIMBA secret speech the following modifications of the Kongo are found, *lusambwa* instead of *lusala*, a feather; *jana* for *vana*, to give; *diomva* for *kwenda*, to go; *nkubuzi* for *mbizi*, meat for food, and *nzimvu* for *masa*, maize.

A member of this society wishing to say "Fetch us some water to drink," would say in Kongo, "*Bong' o maza twanua kweto*," but if he was speaking to a fellow member he would say, "*Diafili ngolumwa tutefa kubwefo*."

The *Kizenga* speech of NDEMBO is of smaller vocabulary than the above, and shows little ingenuity, being mostly ordinary words of the Kongo language prefixed by *ne* and suffixed by *lwa*.

Thus, the ordinary words for "All right, we will go to-morrow," are "*Ke diambu ko mbazi tukwenda*," and the society words become "*Nekelwa nediambulwa ne ko ne kiayi kia nengundi yakala tukwenda ne ngyalala*."

The *Lubendo* of BUTWA is similar. It is formed by transposing the syllables, as *kasaka* for *kakasa*, little foot; or by changing an initial letter as *temuka* for *semuka*, possessed. It preserves some archaic words, as *Ɣambe*, an almost forgotten Batwa word for God, and employs a few manufactured words, especially small words compounded together, as *busanhabemba*, the sprinkler of water from the lake, used secretly to indicate the use of a society medicine.

The secret speech of PENDA-PENDA is largely archaic Baga; that of SINDUNGO is the ancient dialect *Si'ndungo*, now almost extinct in Angola; that of EGBO contains much obsolete Ekoi; and that of MASUBORI, used by the *Arifa* and other officials in prayers to protecting deities, contains some long-forgotten Kanuri and Mandingo words.

The languages of the women's societies have not so rich a vocabulary as those of the men, but they are even more jealously guarded. They are largely concerned with songs and sexual matters. They must not be confused with the " tabu words " about which so much has been written, not only of Africa but of all backward races from the Eskimo to the Maori, and which are merely words forbidden to be used in public. The languages spoken by the women in society gatherings are composed of " sacred " not " tabu " words, and an illustration of their use may be found in the attitude of the Ababda people to their ancient Baja *To-Bedawiet* dialect, who believe that to speak even one word of that tongue before strangers would bring ruin to themselves and to all they represent.

SOCIETY SONGS

The society songs would also repay the study of linguists desiring to know more of the foundations of West Coast languages.

Those of BUTWA " are of archaic words set to weird melodies." The EKONGOLA chants have been " handed down in a tongue so old as to be practically forgotten in the present day." The BUNDU girls are taught their duties and responsibilities in " songs sung in a speech unknown to any save themselves, and said to be in the same language their ancestors spoke." The KATAHWIRIBA women sing the old war-songs of the Ashanti warriors' wives. The novices of AMPORA, AYAKA, EKKPE, and IKUNG are given instruction in " chants, long-drawn out and mostly of melancholy sound, full of words that may only be understood after long and fatiguing training," and verses " couched in a foreign tongue, said to be that of the society," and " hymns

of praise, barbarous and dissonant, containing words not meant for the understanding of ordinary ears," and "songs of a meaning hidden deeply in a jargon of words as secret as everything else belonging to the society."

Those of PENDA-PENDA "link up past and present," and echo "what may be called the first penetration of darkest Africa by the poetry of the mediæval East," some of them being laudations of monarchs "who were contemporary with William the Conqueror of England." Those of BORI and MASUBORI tell of "a civilisation, Berber rather than Arab," which began "as early as 800 A.D. in Central Sudan and has continued more or less the same to our day." Those of MANNAKEH and MORI tell of kingdoms "older than any known in the Nile Valley," and those of SI'MO, as did the *Karari* of the Hausa peoples, sing of the ancient kingdom of Ethiopian Meroe, from which may have come the first foundation of the Christian kingdom of Dongola.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF USE

Illustrations of the use of these secret names and languages are included in other chapters of this book, but the following is also worth recording:

"The Hut Tax Insurrection of 1898" (in Sierra Leone) "was led by Bai Bureh ("Kabalai"), the man who, although not of chief's stock, had become a powerful king by his successful leading of the Temne army against the Susu settlers in 1873. He was not antagonistic towards the ruling powers, as witness the fact that he had been their ally in the 1892 campaign, but he was bitterly opposed to the tax, and successfully led the opposition to it. He refused to see any of the envoys sent to him by the Government, and things were checkmate

until a messenger penetrated the Kassi country and gained an interview with the Bai. After that the opposition ended. . . . It was discovered that the interview was made possible by the messenger being able to speak the secret language of Kabalai and his followers."

CHAPTER X

SOCIETY VOICES AND SIGNS

Oracles—Bull-roarers—Shouts—Horn Language—Drum Language—Other Voices—Message Writing—Members' Signs—Society Signs—Staves and Batons.

ORACLES

Two Ibo societies boast "voices" after the similitude of the Delphic oracle, AYAKA and OKONKO, and there is evidence that ORO and EGBO, and a few other associations, also once had the very material support of kindred phenomena.

The OKONKO oracle is the Aro-Chuka *Igwe-ka-Ani* (in native parlance, "The Long Ju-Ju Man"), still said to be heard in a natural amphitheatre among the hills between Old Calabar and the Niger, somewhere in the direction of Abo. Litigants used regularly to visit this spot for the settlement of their difficulties until the military punitive expedition of 1902 attempted to put an end to the superstition and its accompanying sacrifices. Details of the success of the expedition vary, but the litigants still go, maybe not quite so regularly as before, and without the loss of life that was formerly a marked feature of the rite. The losers of the "law-suits" decided by the oracle now pay "costs" in mere loss of goods instead of loss of liberty or of life.

That of AYAKA is located at Awka, a village on the right bank of the Niger, some twenty-five miles east of Onitsha. This oracle was also the

cause of a military expedition, in 1905, but has also survived. A few huts were burned, a few lives lost, a few people intimidated, and, it is said, the rendezvous of the oracle was shifted, but the rite continues, a little shorn of former glory perhaps, and "many thousands of people, a very large majority of the inhabitants of the district in fact, still show undisguised pride in the possession of so wonder-working a ju-ju as *Abwala-Akwa*.

The town of Awka has long been famous as the headquarters of the Nri guild of blacksmiths, a band of men of high prestige not only as workmen but as priests, and this guild "owns" the oracle. As was the case of *Belit*, the Babylonian Lady of the Mountains, *Abwala-Awka* is said to be feminine. She is the reputed daughter of *Igwe-ka-Ani* of Okonko. But she is addressed always as "Father," and the masculine pronoun is used in addresses to her. *Igwe-ka-Ani*, "the king who is greater than the world he rules," is one of three deities who patronise the oracle, the others being *Eblu-okpa-bin*, "the one who receives you graciously and fills your basket," and *Abwala-Awka* herself.

A village, Ezi-Awka, guards the shrine, its houses being built right up to the edge of the only accessible side of a ravine, wherein dwells *Abwala*. The dwellings of the Ayaka officials, who keep strict watch against trespassers, are along the narrow and tortuous entrance path, over against an open square of some size, where stand the ruins of ritual huts and the special lean-to building that shelters the ancient and giant drum of the society. Just beyond the last house an opening in the bush can be seen, a rough track in the semi-darkness caused by thick foliage. This "descends for some seventy yards or so and then further progress seems stayed by a wall. This is a natural rock-face, through which a guarded entrance has been cleverly made, leading into what

appears at first total darkness but which is really a downward path through the perpetual twilight of unbroken bush. Beyond this, about twenty-five yards further on, in a leafy bower, stand the two sacred trees." (Only one tree is now standing, and this is fast decaying from the vast amount of iron driven into its trunk, in the form of nails, by the litigants.) "To the right of the trees is another narrow opening between high rocky banks, and beyond this an artificial winding alley ending in a cul-de-sac. Here all must stay save the highest officials."

Those seeking the aid of the oracle are blindfolded before leaving the village, and are guided every step of the way. At the cul-de-sac they are made to stand with their backs to the *kamanu* or secret place, whilst their guides shout a description of the visitors and a precis of the cases they have brought to be tried. "O *Abwala-Awka*, hear us," they cry. "Great *Igwe-ka-Ani*, hear us; hear us, O, *Eblu-okpa-bin*: we bring to thee this problem: solve it by thy power: we do not know, but thou knowest: by heart and head thou knowest: thou tellest the righteous from the unrighteous: the innocent are thy friends: the guilty thou dost slay: hear us, thou that revealest all secrets: hear us, thou that punishest without fear of consequences: hear us, thou that givest life to reward the guiltless and deprives of life the guilty: hear us, great *Abwala-Awka*: hear us, mighty *Igwe-ka-Ani*: hear us wise *Eblu-okpa-bin*."

Then there issues, apparently from the bowels of the earth, a thunderous voice, that causes utter consternation to all the strangers present. "*E-enenendum-e-en-nwam-a-a-nwam*." This has been interpreted, "O my sons, my disciples, my friends, you are right! It is I who have the power of life and death: who know falsehood from truth! He who

often proves me learns a lot: he sees clearly: he is unafraid, for he has clean eyes!" Commotion follows, rumblings, whistlings, tornado-like crashings, and the *Osu-Abwala*, the priest of the oracle, warns all to stand still "lest they be swallowed up by the Wrath of the Gods." Then follows the judgment, and the successful suppliants are given a feather and the others heavily fined, and both principal and witnesses add nails to those already in the sacred tree.

The return procession is then formed, the strangers not having the bandages taken from their eyes until the square is reached. A feast is held, amidst cries of the successful, "*Abwala neylum ugo-ugo-ugo!*" (*Abwala* has given us the eagle-feather!) It is an expensive business. There is an initial gift of goats and fowls. At the cul-de-sac they place as much money as they can afford on a prostrate tree-trunk. There are the nails, roughly-shaped staples and arrow-heads, to buy. There are donations to all concerned, and two cows for the officials, one for their ownership and one for the feast.

BULL-ROARERS

The instrument known as a "bull-roarer" is the "voice," or one of them, of many of the societies. It interprets the messages of the deities. It is found in many parts of the world, and is usually of very simple construction, being a lath or two laths of thin wood and a piece of string or tie-tie creeper, the "roar" being produced by the rapid twirling of the instrument above the head of the performer.

That of Ogboni has two laths of camwood, the wooden parts being called *ishe Oro* and the string part *ashe Oro*. This society also has a smaller instrument called *aja Oro*, Oro's dog. The Egugu name

is *bini-elimidu*, the speaking of the spirit. The *ode-gilli-gilli* of AYAKA differs from some of the others in having notched edges.

When that of NKANDA sounds out in the sacred enclosure, and any of the novices show fear of the noise, their tutors say, "Surely you are not afraid! You who up to now have been impudent to everybody; you who have had no respect, no reverence, even for your elders! Do not run away, for if you do you will never learn what it is that the gods wish to say to you!"

SHOUTS

BUNDU has a society "shout," a long-drawn-out cry well known in the districts where the society functions. The members when making it raise their arms above the head as they begin, letting the cry become a weird shriek, then stoop down and touch their toes with their finger-tips, meanwhile softening the cry, and finally bring the body back to normal position, the cry dying away softly and lingeringly. NKIMBA is known by a long trilling that penetrates the darkness in unearthly manner and carries long distances.

EGBO makes a distinctive noise by holding a leaf over the mouth, and AYAKA uses a bit of small reed with a spider-web mouthpiece stuck on with liquid rubber. The sound produced is "very like that made by blowing through a comb enveloped in thin paper." The "speech" of BOIBENTE is made by a leaf in a split cane.

The TONGO-PLAYERS herald their approach by hooting like owls, LUBUKU by a thin whining supposed to be the voice of spirits, and BUTWA by imitation of animal noises. AMPORA calls its members together by using a tortoise-shell as a gong,

and the members of Poro can recognise each other by day or night by a slight inflexion of the voice learned in the puberty school.

HORN LANGUAGE

The language of horn-note is as highly developed in some societies as it is amidst the Bakwiri and Duala tribes. The horns used are those of antelope, eland, hudu, reed-buck, and bull, hippopotamus and elephant. The blowing hole is usually at the side near the tip. Some have holes for purposes of notation, and some have bottle-shaped and other gourds fixed to the larger end to assist in modulating the sound.

The Poro bull-horns are four feet or more in length; tied in pairs with a communicating hole, the sound passing through both.

Ogboni has a set of five hippo-horns, secured together like pan-pipes, and pierced with holes of varying dimensions. The instrument is obviously old, and the musicians have been supplied from one family for many generations. The sound produced ranges five tones and some semi-tones, is uncanny in its higher notes, vigorous in volume, and terrifying to the unexpectant.

Some membership grades, as in Butwa and Okonko, are known by the kind of horn carried.

DRUM LANGUAGE

The cadence of the African drum-notes once heard is always remembered. From the point of view of music it is haunting, and because the sounds are telling a story, sounding out a command or conveying a message, they are mysteriously fascinating.

"We received detailed news of the death of a white baby," says a missionary, "two days' journey by steamer from the place where the news originated."

The players are inheritors of a code of drum-speech, as effective as morse, that defies translation by the uninitiated, and that has never been divulged to any person not belonging to the families who supply the players. The instruments seem to actually syllabize, and the inflection of a phrase, its cadences, its intreaty or threat, its importance, its amusement, are perfectly transmitted. So real and so natural is this language to those who use it that they unconsciously "speak drum" to one another, conversing in the staccato phrasing of their playing.

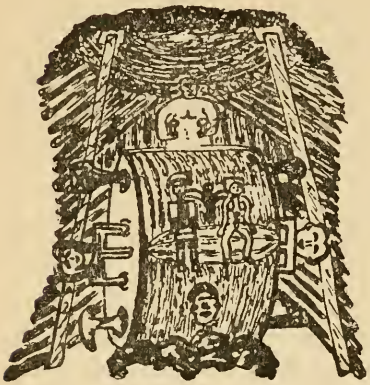
Few drummers use more than two notes, the "male" and "female," but these they inflect as they wish. "Presently Sakutu, our own drummer . . . will abruptly and terrifically split into accurate lengths of tumult the quiet day crying out to the rim of the horizon our message. Everywhere the villages will give ear to that message, until seventeen miles from here, in the neighbourhood of Njabilobe, the last vibration dies."

The usual playing position is between the knees of the operator. They may be beaten or thrummed or played by friction. Some have a thong across the membrane and others a lace through it, these being manipulated by moistened fingers.

The Kufong *fange* is an ancient war-drum made of the thigh-bone of a chief who was for long an active enemy of the Limba tribe, a narrow strip of hide being tightly stretched from end to end. This is struck with a bamboo hammer.

The Yassi *kereh* is a hollowed tree trunk. It is large enough to be played upon by three men (honorary officials of the society) sitting side by side. That of Penda-Penda is also part of a tree,

shaped roughly like an hour-glass. It is claimed that even cattle recognise the call of this drum and come in from their pasturage when they hear it.



Okonko Drum.

The Okonko drum at Umu-Nze is housed in a lean-to building, which it almost entirely fills, and is of some artistry in workmanship. The height of the actual cylinder is eight feet five, its depth seven feet ten, and its width five feet eight, the ornamental extensions at the sides bringing this last to ten feet two. It is hewn from a single block of *uroko*, and shows signs of great age. The playing surface is small, and the player sits raised above the height of his instrument. There is a tradition that the drum was the work of a man of Amawbia, who had earned a great reputation for his instruments; that it took him twelve months to complete, and that he was sacrificed over his finished work that his blood might "tone" it.

This society also uses small drums like clay pots, held under the left arm and pierced with two holes. They are played by beating the top hole with the open palm, the other palm being used to close and unclose the hole at the side. They emit a mellow booming sound that rises or falls as the lower hole is covered or left open.

Ogboni has a set of five drums, upon which a highly specialised language is produced. They are known as a "family," the largest being the "bull." Upon them "sound out messages varying

in tone from the cackle of roosting birds to the howl of a leopard, and from the squeak of a frightened puppy to the trumpeting of a rogue elephant."

The NDEMBO drum is the complete skin of a goat or antelope stretched taut about a wicker frame. There is a diaphragm let into the back that is played upon, kettle-drum fashion, with sticks.

PORO has several *sangboi*, bowl-shaped, with holes on the underside. The largest has several skins, one being that of a European Slaver who had the ill-luck to sell an official of the society into slavery.

OTHER VOICES

BORI and MASUBORI use *balenjah*, a type of xylophone, played by men called *yele*, as is the *marimba* of PORO. The wooden keys, from twelve to forty in number, are carved from hard resonant timber, generally rosewood, scooped out slightly at the centre. They are laid on two parallel bars, straight or U-shaped. Under each key is suspended a bladder-thin calabash, containing cobweb in differing quantities, graduated in size, which act as resonators. The keys are struck with metal rods or sticks with rubber heads. The largest appear to have the fewest chords, being mostly pentatonic, but some of the smaller have the greatest compass of any African musical instrument. Of their makers nothing is known. Most are old, and are treasured and guarded. If there is a method of tuning them this is kept secret.

PENDA-PENDA has a stringed instrument that resembles the seven-stringed *barbiton* of the ancient Persians, that was made famous by its use amongst the classical Greeks and Romans. BUTWA has a *chansa*, a guitar-like instrument of several strings. NDEMBO has a *nsambi*, cithera shaped, a wooden

box lengthened by bamboos, the strings being stretched from the limit of the box to the curved ends of the bamboos. It has a harp-like sound, and is used frequently to accompany solo singing. When played softly, and when the singer's voice is modulated, the performance is not without merit.

Masubori also has the *arghoul*, a wood-wind device of two reeds bound together and blown into by the same breath. They are of different lengths, the shorter having holes for the fingers to cover. It emits a droning sound. This society also has an instrument akin to the Scottish bagpipes.

Ampora and Poro use syrinx or flutes of guinea-corn stalks or vegetable reeds or bamboo. They have only one note, but a dozen or so musicians can make melody on them by sounding out the note of their particular reed at exactly the right moment. Some are very shrill and penetrating, others have a dove-like note.

The last-named society also uses a flute of seven holes, each covered by cobweb, of sweet but mournful tone. Dyoro uses bone flutes.

Bili have big whistles that must be blown by the candidates, the players being beaten whilst they blow.

Bundu use *schgma* and *sehgura*, rattles made of bottle-gourds covered with a loose meshwork of seeds. Nkamba and Nkimba use *benjue*, rattles of cane in which are split shells. Okonko also has an official rattle.

This last society, with Ayaka, Nri, Oro, and others, uses anvils as musical instruments, striking out the tunes or delivering the messages with ordinary hammers or iron bars.

Okonko also has a society bell, the *ogenne*, of smelted iron, three feet in length and oval in shape, with flattened edges, and reputed to be ancient and valuable.

Several societies teach a whistled language, sometimes helped by a small instrument placed in the mouth, or before the lips. That of AYAKA and OKONKO is a hollow ball of clay, about the size of a billiard ball, having two holes, one at the top for mouthpiece and one at the side for fingering. The notes, blown piccolo-fashion, are shrill but can be surprisingly varied. During the war between the Nkpaw and the Ogiddi peoples these instruments were said to have been much used for signalling purposes. The AMPORA youths are taught to speak to each other with sounds made through the stalk of a pawpaw leaf.

MESSAGE WRITING

A DUBAIA man will send a message by the aid of a small stone, a piece of charcoal, an alligator pepper, a few grains of maize, and a bit of rag. These might be interpreted as follows: As this stone is hard so is my body—I am well. As this charcoal is black so is my present outlook: but as it can be again used so I may have another chance. As this pepper is hot so is my thought towards you—my heart is warm when I think of you. As this corn is parched so am I for news of you. I cannot come to you, but here is a bit of a garment I have worn —its touch will keep me in your remembrance.

The Batshok members of CHIBADOS have a system of communication by means of bits of folded material, each fold conveying a part of the message, their straightness or crookedness, their neat or ruffled aspect, being eloquent to the initiated.

KEMAH, OYENI, RARUBA, and other societies use kola nuts to interpret their wishes (their use is widespread in Africa as tokens of welcome), LUBUKU members send honey, and IBAN-ISONG and NDITO-

IBAN send sugar. A BUTWA "threat" may be conveyed by a fagot, each stick being part of the message, and a MUNGI "punishment" may be suggested by a bamboo stick charred at one end. NKIMBA send powder and shot and NDEMBO a razor.

OGBONI members are clever in the use of cowries. Three on a string, all facing the same way, may indicate an unanimous decision ("all the members are of the same mind"); if there is a space between the second and third it says "*Ogboni meji li o mo idi Eta*" ("Two Ogbonis know the meaning and matter of the Three.") One on a short grass cord may be defiance, two strung face to face indicate remembrance, and enmity if back to back. If there is a feather between the two facing shells it says "Come without delay," and if the two in the same position are filled with soap and camwood-powder it is a demand for truth and faithfulness. Three filled with pepper suggest caution, a string of five may tell of mortal sickness, six sent to a woman is a declaration and to a man a token of affection and loyalty, but seven can sever friendship, end a visit or be an invitation to a festival. Eight may clinch a business transaction or be the favourable answer to the six from the lover. Nine may indicate intention to punish or a hope that health is improved. Ten on a piece of leather mean as genuine a welcome as ever black man can give to white man, and forty strung upside down once started one of those long inter-tribal wars that this society used to make part of its propaganda.

The significance of certain numbers has already been referred to when mentioning the society councils, but it may be noted here how often that of three occurs. DYORO and ORO boast a triple guardianship and a triple power. (The members of the first often say, "Nothing can overcome the power of the Three.") The religious rites of BORI and some

of the rites of Poro, Ampora, and other societies' are performed three times. There are generally three chief officials other than the Head and his Deputy. Most of the oaths are triple. Some of the grade signs are in threes, as the staff, the horn, and the bag of the *Ajalija* of Okonko; as are also some of the acknowledgments of one grade to another. A tabu is often lifted by a threefold rite, the ceremony of Ndembo being the firing of three little heaps of gunpowder. The Bundu songs are sung three times, and often the ceremonial dances are in groups of threes. Some of the doctor's prescriptions are in threes, as the Banban charms, "three seeds for smallpox, three scales for skin disease, three beans for rheumatism, three shells for childbirth, etc." The Egbo doctors divide their rewards, the goods or cash paid to them, into three divisions, one for the gods, one for the society, and one for themselves. Some of the society signs are triple, as in Boviowah, Butwa and Ndembo.

MEMBERS' SIGNS

The signs by grip or touch of hand are carefully thought out. In the salutation of the shaking of hands, for instance, a ceremony becoming more and more popular, they, as did the Gnostics according to old Epiphanius, by a touch or tickle of the finger on the other palm tell their secret. Poro scratch with the middle finger the palm presented to them, the response being given in the same way. Butwa has a touch of the fingers to the head, followed by a movement of them down the face with soft lingering pressure as they descend. Kangar and Kemah members make horns above their brows with upraised first fingers, or double down the first two and keep the others raised. An Adamu man

strokes the muscle of his right arm and murmurs a word that might be interpreted "strength," and the women of KATAHWIRIBA crook the left arm as if holding a child on the hip.

EGBO has a shuffle or side-step that carries recognition as well as respect.

KUFONG makes knots in string, or cord of vine, whilst talking, and if the listener is a member he will take the string and add an answering knot.

Most members are given something to wear, this acting not only as a charm but as a sign of recognition: rings, anklets, bracelets, plumes, bunches of leaves or twigs, coronets, etc. Some of these may be ordinary, but the method of wearing them will be secret, as is said to be the way the blossom is worn behind the ear of a CHIBADOS woman. The old, heavy, metal rings, like the copper anklet of OKONKO, are not now much in evidence. KUFONG and PORO used to be known by brass big-toe rings. Beads are frequent, especially the long, blue, pipe beads. EGBO and OGBONI wear bracelets of long glass beads, blue or yellow or black-striped. BOVIOWAH wear groundnuts of three kernels. PORO has a little plume of plaited elephant grass and thorn, and IDIONG a plain fibre circlet for its probationary grade, and one with the fibre thickly covered with folds of goat-skin for those of full membership. The TONGO-PLAYERS wear a leopard's tail.

SOCIETY SIGNS

Each society has one particular sign that may be used by all its members. These are invincible as protective agencies. Their presence is as sufficient as that of the highest official, indeed, of all the officials. It has supreme authority. "A sure way of gaining redress, whether vengeance or the collecting of a

debt, is to send the society sign." Placed against the entrance to a village it is the most formidable tabu known, a prohibition against, say, trespass or theft, more formidable than any police, African or European.

These society signs may be one or several.

Poro has five. A bunch of leaves, a bundle of twigs, a plume, a spiral, and two double pyramids. In the war year of 1898 in Sierra Leone these signs were often recognised by the native scouts employed with the British troops, and their presence was said to have fostered the insurrection. The kind of leaves used, their direction, the number of the twigs, their lengths, etc., all had a meaning. The spirals, called *dimomoi*, may be of twisted green palm or creeper, and may be seen outside the outer gate of the sacred enclosure, hanging from crossed bamboos or two young trees tied across each other. It is also worked into the pattern of the reed or bamboo huts. It is said to be the personal sign of the *Grand Tasso*. The two double pyramids may also be part of the decorative schemes, or they may be seen scratched on house-walls and marked in the dust of the road near a village. They are always placed point to point as here indicated.

Poro "dimomoi."

Egugu has its *mutathia*, sacred leaves.

Ndembo has a bundle of crooked twigs, *nkita*, distortions, and adds to them twisted roots, gnarled stems, and drawings of clubbed feet and humped backs, and other things broken, ugly or fragmentary.

Ampora has a half-burned leaf.

Egbo has a peacock feather, and also uses the old Pythagorean symbol of friendship, a pentagram, the original form of it owned by the society being said to be a five-pointed meteorite that fell long ages ago somewhere in Nigeria. It is a "sacred stone" kept oiled and clothed in a covering of hide by the officials. The design may be traced in society decorations, especially that of the staves.

Oro has many signs; that of the peacock feather, as Egbo, and that of the human form (two tiny stones of ancient carving, illustrated elsewhere, said to represent its guardian deities, and probably of phallic origin), and, as Aiyasa and others, that of the double pyramid, superimposed lengthwise; the outline that appears on most of the sacred possessions.

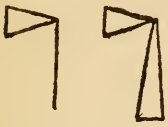
Kufong has a divided pyramid, base downwards. The members trace this, with a toe, in the dust, or suggest it by holding a stick in the palms with one end against the chest, or, when they desire to bring good luck to a friend, write it in water on the wall of the house of that friend. It is said that water only is used so that the quick eyes of the family guardian deities may detect it, but those gods of doubtful intentions may miss it altogether.

Butwa also has signs of crooked things, but its chief sign is shaped like a miniature sign-post. It may be a variation of the cross patee. It is sometimes indicated by crossed sticks, or three strands of some material, or shaped by a careful arrangement of small stones.

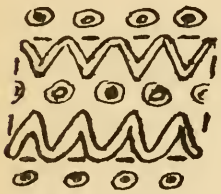
Tilang uses the same pattern with the crossed

ends closed. The Sherbro members of this society view the symbol with great reverence, picking up and preserving anything that they think approximates it in shape or appearance.

Banban has two signs that may be of similar origin, one section or sign being made with a single upright and the other with two. This last may have been originally a half section of a sign like that of Andomba, a society using a complete diagram in all respects answering to the cross patee. This is found scratched upon the stones used by the officials for divination. A somewhat similar design is found amongst the members of Kofoo and Nanam.



Orisha uses a pattern of small irregularly made small pyramids within lines of double circles; sometimes seen made in washes of various colours on the walls of the houses of members. It is a highly decorative effort, and unique of its kind.

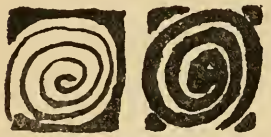


Idiong has a sign of the kind known as swastika or fylot or gammadion, the symbol known in so many parts of the world. It is found as a mural decoration, and may be seen marked against the threshold of a house as a protection; much in the same way as it was found on the step of the House of the Trigolium in Dougga (Thugga), having been marked there thousands of years ago. This sign is also used by Dus and Dyoro.

That of Malanda is a double-headed arrow, sometimes seen with the barbs closed and looking like two small double pyramids joined by a connecting

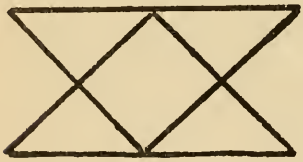
line. (On the east side of the Continent, among the Basuto, this sign is used as a warning of personal or tribal trouble and strife.)

The Mycenæan double spiral in some form or other is seen in ADAMU, GELEDE and NDA. There is an ingenious explanation of the presence of this sign on the West Coast. As far back as the Minoan Age, it is said, negro mercenaries were used in Mediterranean wars, as witnessed by the finding, by Sir Arthur Evans in the house of a citizen of Gnossos, Crete, dating about 1600 B.C., of a fresco depicting African soldiers led by a white captain. Clay models of castellated towns and fortified buildings, exactly resembling similar prehistoric houses in Crete, have been found, it is claimed, by the Germans in the Kameruns.



HUMOI, IKUNG, NJEMBE, KONO and BELLI-PAARO also use spiral signs, the last-named having in addition an outline that suggests a tau cross, frequently seen worked into mural and other decorations; the possession of this being probably accounted for in like manner as the double spirals above mentioned.

AIYASA has one that can be described as two pyramids superimposed, and variations of this may be found in ORO, EPE, MBORKO, SINDUNGO, and some other societies. That of the last-named has a dotted circle inside the central diamond.

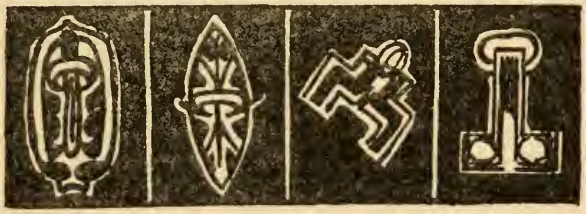


The TONGO-PLAYERS use the sign of the leopard claw, in the forms illustrated. This is a frequent sign right across the continent, on the eastern side being

known amongst tattoo marks as the "hen's foot." One writer commenting on these converging lines has drawn from the sign, or read into it, a connection with "the name of the Son of Ptah, the Light of the World."

The Masubori signs suggest the mark of an animal pad, a human form, and the head of an ancient spear. They are found marked on the society implements and included in decorative works. Bori has kindred signs.

Phallic signs are frequent in Oro, Egbo, Nimm, Katahwiriba, Orisha, and other societies. They



Phallic Signs.

are in the form of the human body as images or sketches, or in that of pictured indications of infibulation, either male or female muzzling.

Okonko has modelled figures of tinted clays decorated with strips of raphia palm. Egbo and Nimm use the tortoise symbol, the emblem of motherhood and fecundity as ancient as the world itself. There are pictures in some of the council houses of old pederastical practices. In the districts influenced by Belli-Paaro, Egbo, Ebere, Ekkpo-Njawhaw, Dus, Dyoro, Izyoga, Kono, Mungi, Nanam and

others, upright conical stones, wooden shafts and shaped rocks, sometimes grouped about an altar, may be found. These may be linga or lingam stones such as are used in the worship of the supreme Hindu deity *Siva*. The pillar in the EGBO council house is here illustrated from a description sent to the writer. It is about six feet high, and is cut from a single stone.

The Egbo Pillar.

All the above chief signs of the societies are occasionally found marked on the bodies of the members, either permanently by tattoo process or temporarily, for festival purposes, in paints and washes. The two divided triangles of PORO are put on the back, with two lines beneath them that pass round the waist and incline upwards to meet at the pit of the stomach.

Other marks and colourings are as follows: MORI makes geometrical designs. NKANDA puts on the temples circles of the red ointment of *tukula* wood. OVRA covers the stomach with closely knit lines. LUBUKU puts a vertical line down the centre of the forehead. BUNDU paints its signs on the back and loins. KUFONG makes three marks on the chest. YASSI covers all the body with circles of many-coloured washes, white, yellow, black and brown predominating. This society also makes a single maze-like line on the cheek. TORMAI paints red the upper part of the body. EGBO puts the *ekiu* mark of the *mbawkaw* grade in camwood dye on the forehead, that of the *Oku Akama* grade on abdomen and back of shoulders, and the yellow mark of *Nkanda* in five circles on head, chest

and back. PENDA-PENDA paints a crescent, with points upward.

Most ancient or medieval things in Africa, from old Carthage to New Cape Town, are decorated with some form of the serpent symbol, a fact due to phallic mystery, or simply to the love of a curving line, therefore it is not at all surprising that many of the societies include some form of this design amongst their signs. This may be a mere indication or the complete drawing, such as can be seen in KURE, OFI-OKPO, OVIA and RARUBA designs. It is frequently included in the ornamented staves carried by the officials, as in this one of the last-named society. "Flying serpents" are heard of in many parts of the land. In Ashanti they are one of the eight things invoked to secure the foundations of a new house, and in Angola they are said to form the staple ingredient of a medicine given for a certain purpose to brides.

Kure Medicine Bowl.

A society sign frequently seen is two young trees tied so that their stems cross each other, this being a usual custom near sacred enclosures and places. Often from the crossed portion hangs the secret sign worked in plaited fibre.

STAVES AND BATONS

Some of the official staves have been described in the account of the OKONKO grades. That of ORO is a sapling of the *haronga madagascariensis*, known as the bloodstick (*amuje*, Yoruba). That of

Poro is a long carved stem, decorated with seven cowries, all strung one way. That of Egbo is cleverly ornamented in metal inset with ivory and crystals, and surmounted by a metal pentagram. Its *Eturi* grade carries one of African mahogany curiously and cleverly carved. The *mithegi* of Egugu and the stave of Bori are said to be ancient and valuable. That of the Tongo-Players is long and knobbed, with sharp pieces of metal like knife-blades inserted at the head. That of Ndembo is a distorted crook, the warped stem being deeply indented with the marks of a once entwining vine. The Nkimba *mvwala* is of ironwood, carved and inlaid with a fantastic pattern in metal. On it are four knobs or bosses, differing in size and position, each denoting an essential constituent of the authority of the society. The boss near the head and the largest in size is called "Mercy"; the next, nine inches below and next in size, is called "Anger"; the next is "Judgment"; and the last "Slavery."

Bundu and Malanda Batons.

"The best is first, the worst last. It is an order of merit which could hardly be improved upon at Westminster or Washington. Mercy, Anger, Judgment, Slavery, but the first and largest, that nearly always in the hand of the chief official, is *Mercy* — an element quite as conspicuous in judicial heathendom as it is in judicial Christendom."

Batons may be carried by, or in front of, the chief officials; an elephant tail, the symbol of African royalty, preceding those who preside over the important Law-God societies. The two here illustrated are more elaborate than most. That of Bundu is a heavy shaft of metal and

ivory, probably of Portuguese manufacture, above which is fixed a conventual design in brass and copper with pendent tassels of ancient, gold thread. That of MALANDA is a wand of some hard wood, about fourteen inches long, elaborately carved, and polished by use during long centuries. It is surmounted by a human head, tiny because boneless, long-haired as if of a woman of other than Negroid race; the skin ivory-like with age and oil.

CHAPTER XI

RELIGIOUS TEACHING

The Theology of the Schools—A Supreme Deity—Messenger Gods—Tribal Gods—Family Guardians—Companion Spirits—The Imps, Sprites and Fairies—After-Death Spirits.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE SCHOOLS

The African has always been religious. The earliest travellers to come into contact with him also came into contact with his god or gods, or their symbols. When the ancient Egyptians were building up their own religious beliefs they borrowed largely from those of negro slaves in their midst, whom they recognised as intensely religious, and as more sensitive than most in certain respects to religious influences. Proof can be gained from a study of the *Ammon-Ra* (Amen-Rë) rites, that were practised thousand of years ago by the *Amun* cult, whose oracle was established in the Libyan oasis of Siwa, and whose best-known headquarters was Thebes.

The religious teaching of the schools still makes a profound impression upon African youth. This may be partly due to the practice of hypnotism by the tutors to augment the instruction, and to aid the scholars to more readily grasp, or penetrate, the mysteries presented (and the part that hypnosis and autohypnosis, conscious and unconscious, play in these schools cannot be overestimated); also partly to the fact that it is given at a time when the minds, as well as the bodies, of the pupils are

strongly influenced by the atmosphere of the sacred enclosure.

Here they are taught pride in their ancestry, the pride that is the foundation of most religions, ancient and modern, civilised or barbaric, the pride that fosters admiration and reverence, and suggests regulations for the conduct of life; and here they are taught the theology of their people and the ritual used in the worship of their various gods, some afar off, some near, some good and some bad.

A Supreme Deity. Most teach the presence, somewhere in the universe, of an all-hearing, all-pervading, all-powerful deity, who may be known under a single or under a combination of names, who may be a person or have human attributes, or an idea only, or a phenomenon of nature, or—as is most general—an amalgamation of all these things.

Those designated Creators are *Chambi* of the Bakuba, "the one who made all things and who has the form of a man with the tail of an animal and who is of white colour"; *Nyongmo* of the Accra, to whom the prayer is made, "We see every day how the grass and the corn and the trees spring forth through the rain and the sunshine sent by thee, O Nyongmo: thou art their creator, and we are thy grateful servants"; *Nyankopon* of the Ashanti, whose best manifestation is the sun; *Arámfè* of the Ibo; and *Eleda* of the Egba, of whom it is said, "The creator of all is Eleda, and the greatest of all."

The Kagora call their supreme deity *Gwazi*, the almighty and all-beneficent, helping mankind against the powers of evil, preserving the health of men and advancing their fortunes. He is ever busy, for he rules the sun in its rise and decline, the moon in her changes, the seasons in their successions, the stars and the spirit world. To win his favour one

must be faithful and good, such being "the favourites of Gwazi."

The Temne call him *Kuru* or *Kurumasaba*, the god of the sky, who is one of the few worshipped by both good Pagan and Mussulman alike. The Senufo of the Ivory Coast call him *Kuluikieri*. "High above, far along, and deep below went the great Kuluikieri, God and Creator. His every step created earth: his glance cast before him created stars: his anxieties, the sun: his gladness, the moon: his tears, the sea: his thought, the insects, birds, animals and—men. When Kuluikieri had done all this he threw over his creations the blue cloak of heaven, hid himself behind it for ever, and rested. He does not see the world he created: he does not hear the sound of the thunders, the roar of the waves . . . or our prayers. . . ."

That last sentence, and the cry of the Kagora people, "Gwazi is very busy, he sometimes forgets man," gives the reason why the African teaches that there are other gods besides the supreme ones. These, they say, are the children of the supreme ones, the interpreters of the wish and the defenders of the law of the supreme ones. "The supreme spirit," say the Bushongo, is too high above all to interfere. He is the dynamic principle ordering and controlling the universe, and it is that great task that prevents him doing anything else. He has established the law and has created lesser gods to preserve it. And they go on to illustrate their thought by the working of the civil law established by the European powers. You cannot see this civil law, it has no abiding place, it is intangible, but if you break it or forget it the *Yulu* (chief policeman) "puts your neck into his forked stick." *Yulu* represents the civil law; the lesser gods represent the law established by the creator-god.

These "serving" gods they divide into groups

some of them being messengers, some tribal protectors, some family guardians, some companion spirits, and some that may best be denominated imps.

Messenger Gods. The Messenger Gods are many, some of the supreme deities being credited with as many as fifty serving sons. The Yoruba *Arámfè* has for firstborn *Odúwa*, to whom he gave "the five-clawed bird" and "the sand of power," and for a favourite *Orisha*, to whom was given the "bag of wisdom's guarded lore and arts, for man's well-being and advancement." (It was the struggle between these two that "called forth a world of envy and of war.") *Orisha* had a cult, now the society of the same name, and amongst other sons of *Arámfè* who have become guardians of societies are *Olurun*, said to be his father's chief lieutenant, of ORO; *Ora* of OSHORBO; *Ifa* of AFA; and *Ikun* of IKUNG.

Mawu, one of the messenger gods of the Ewe-speaking peoples, is said to know the thoughts and hearts of men, to be the giver of all good, to be very patient and never angry, and to be the righteous punisher of the brother who deceives, the king who is false to his people, and the man who burns down his neighbour's house without offence.

Female deities are found amongst this group, generally being given Athene-like attributes of manly resolution and womanly wisdom. They preside, paired usually with a male deity, over the fertility cults, and some of their "images," that are so often oiled and given floral offerings, are said to be amongst the most ancient of the possessions of the societies. *Eka Abassi*, the Great Mother of the Ibibio, superintends births and deaths, being "especially glad when a man-child is born." When death approaches the Ibibio say, "The Great Mother desires to take me." "Being a woman she knows what is good

for man, what they should desire and what they should avoid."

Tribal Gods. This group is very distinct from the last. Very rarely are they given human attributes. Although the idea of their association and their power is intermingled into every bit of the social system of tribal life, although their presence and their participation supply the principle on which tribal law is dispensed and morality adjusted, and although they are so interwoven into the common life that there is not any escape from them, they remain the vaguest and most shadowy and least known of all the deities.

They may be "manifested" in such things as storms or epidemics of fever or small-pox. They bring drought. They are responsible for irksome laws of conduct. They are the guardians of the bridge that spans the river of death, and death itself, some think, is entirely their concern, having power to allow or repulse the passing of the spirits that seek to cross that bridge, only, however, say others, after consultation with the ancestral spirits of the seekers.

The *Abosom*, the gods of this group commemorated in the ritual practices of KATAHWIRA and KATAHWIRIBA, are mostly manifested in lightning and fire, storm and deluge, and the dangers connected therewith. The *Nkita* of the Bakongo, whom NDEMBO use as "threatening" powers, employ their strength to cripple unsuspecting persons "deforming a being in the making or crippling a being in accident," or "refraining from inflicting either misfortune as a reward for faithfulness and devotion." The *Gye* of the Agni-Ashanti are known by their bull-like, horned heads, and small fiery eyes.

They are good and they are bad in disposition, but none of them are as bad as some of those in the

next group to be described, and the bad are not as powerful as the good. Thus the good *Chukwu* of the Ibo is superior in every way to the evil *Ekwensu*. Those bad may prevail for a time, as did *Set* (the Greek Typhoon) in his attempt to slay *Osiris*, as night does in its fight with day, but the victory is of short duration; finally good triumphs, as comes again the day, renewed in strength, mighty in power, and glorious in benignancy. And not only are those of bad disposition inferior to those of good, but they are as much hated by the beneficent deities as they are by good men, and because of this every evil-disposed one is watched and followed by one of good intent, who, if not able altogether to prevent, at least tries to counteract the baneful influence.

To these tribal deities are most of the sacrifices made of fowls, goats and cattle, to them the oblations poured of fruit-wines or trade-spirits, and gifts made of fruit and grain, bread and herbs, flowers and oils, aromatic gums and resins and incense. When the Luapula River, Belgian Congo, was closed in the year 1909, owing to sleeping sickness regulations, certain snakes were said to have appeared in some villages on the river-bank, sent by *Songo*, the tribal deity of the Batwa, as a token of his anger that his sacrifices had been neglected. He ordered them to be revived at once, and that all those who desired a successful harvest must send their seed to him to be blessed. And it was done, even against the government regulations. Traffic was surreptitiously restarted on the river by the Butwa officials, the society of whom *Songo* is one of the guardians, and all along its banks his sacrifices were again seen.

These gods may be located in the sea or the lake, in the sky or the rain, or in the earth, the mountain, or the rock. To the Temne the "masculine" good is symbolised by sunshine and growing

crops and flowers, and the "feminine" evil by dry earth and stagnant water. Their memorials may be *ombwiri*, heaps of stones at the gate of a village, that are more added to by passing strangers than by the villagers themselves, or by the red-painted pillars erected by the long-dead ancestors of the present Diula, Bobo and Lobi peoples of the Upper Volta. The memorials of the last-named are often clay altars, of varied shape, surrounded by conical pillars or shaped clay erections. Three "male" spotted red or white, with shells for eyes and other organs of pebbles, and three "female" decorated significantly. It is in these sacred places that there can be seen the trays of seed and ashes, and dry branches loaded with offerings—pieces of hand-woven material, skins, ringlets of hair, and feathers.

Lobi Sacred Place.

It is to these gods that the sacred dances are held, and the prayer-dramas taught in the puberty schools. These dances are prayers in the best sense of that word, for in them is expressed the deepest longing of the African, the desire to be no longer the sport of power, chance and circumstance; the wish for self-expression and self-determination; and the request to the gods to assist in this. Just as the Egyptian hymnist told in lofty terms the majesty of his deities, and the Nilitic psalmist sang of the divine encompassing love, so the negro celebrates his association with the powers that rule his life

in the only way he knows—the way of the dance. In the rhythmic movement of body and limb the man prays that his manhood may be a success, the woman that she may be fertile, the husband claims protection for his family, the wife craves safety for her husband, and the children demonstrate their wants and wishes. For the last are trained to understand that the spending of their little strength in such dancing helps the safety of all.

Family Guardians. Most African families are as rich in protecting powers, here termed "Family Guardians," as were the Gnostics of Alexandria, who boasted the possession of one for every day of the year. Images of them are found in multitudes of homes, grotesque in shape, proportion and aspect because of the maker's desire to picture a combination of the natural and the supernatural. The *ikenga* of Ibo families are half-men, half-angel, heavy of body but winged, seated, but looking as if resting between flights. To these images a great deal of attention is paid. They are oiled and tended, garlanded and given food, praised when the luck of their owners is good and blamed when it is not, but it is not right to say that they are worshipped. They are "sacred" in the same way as are the enclosures and the trees, also the fetishes. A fowl may be sacrificed to them and the blood sprinkled on the lintels of the door.

They are the "household gods" whose special duty it is to fully sympathise with, care for, protect, heal, strengthen, and grant ease and gladness, and they are expected to inculcate esteem and love between the members of the family. They centre little private services of a sacramental nature, conducted by society officials, like the one of Egbo, where the priest hands round, loving-cup fashion, a specially prepared medicinal drink. Each member of

the family drinks from the vessel, from the father to the youngest child, all supposed to wish good to the others as they do so. The ceremony may be accompanied by the enforcement of a new tabu, only known to the official and the family, the carrying out of which keeps the members in memory of one another when separated by the exigencies of daily life.

They are the "interpreters," the gods who keep the household informed of what the greater gods are doing or are intending to do. They are consulted upon domestic matters in much the same way as Odysseus, anxious about his return home, gave himself assurance by friendly converse with the spirits. They are the "knowing ones." In some way, hard to explain but easy to believe, they understand family life, and the knowledge is manifested in ever ready and complete sympathy.

Companion Spirits. Every man and woman, also child has one or more "companion spirits," intimate minor deities personally concerned with the individual, familiars of even more intimate type than those last described. (The word "spirit" is here used for its convenience only; but these deities must not therefore become confused with the "after-death" spirits, the ghosts afterwards to be explained.)

A man going out of his house in the morning happens to strike his foot against a stone, and immediately inquires, "Art thou there?" accepting the accident as the expression of a desire on the part of his companion spirit to communicate with him. A woman's millet-beater slips from her hands and quickly she makes the same request, quite sure that this is a signal that must be attended to at once. A Kufong member is said to know of their near presence by an itching in his palm or in the sole of his foot.

There is little attempt to give them form or personality. They are the "near things." Always and everywhere they are described as "near." Questioned about them the PORO member waves his hand vaguely and says, "O, just something behind my shoulder." (It is interesting that the Jews share that description.) The ORA member says, "They are everywhere." The KUFONG member declares they come when he calls their name aloud seven times; but he will not say what the name is he uses. The EGUGU officials state that they are as interested in the society as the human members.

They may be like the man, the woman or the child they accompany, good-looking or plain, good-humoured or irascible; they may be the water-pixies that drive the fish into the fisherman's net, or the sunbeams that warm an ague-shivering person; they may even be the sharks or the crocodiles that by their presence keep away other dangers; but generally they are just good influences, always within call, and ever employed in labours of warning and protection.

If there is but one of them that is enough, but if two, then the benefits of their presence are doubled. If there are three, they may be, as the Yoruba say, "one for the head, one for the body, and one to guide both." Any number may take charge of a single individual, and it is a fortunate man who has enough to control each finger and each toe.

These are they who give tips for the improvement of business and hints as to the efficacy of medicines, who soothe sorrow, inspire hope, and ensure the desired sex at births. "Amongst them there is what, for convenience, we may call a Scotland Yard department for giving the criminal his just due; a Red Cross and Medical department to deal with mishaps, aches, and pains; a Judicial department

which fines and flays after the manner of the Star Chamber or the Inquisition; a Trading department; a Sporting department; a Freemasonry section so secret that even a 'master' knows not all its ceremony; in fact, a department or party or section for every purpose which lies within the compass of native thought."

In ordeals these are the deities to whom prayer is offered by the victims. There is a belief that faithfulness to them ensures safety at such critical times. According to the Ashanti the companion spirit enters the body with the compulsory draught, looks about to find evidences of guilt, and, if he finds none, returns with the vomit that saves the victim from being poisoned. Many West Coast people call them "the personal gods," meaning the gods who bestow personality. The African is a great believer in himself. He requires no assurance that he is of personal importance. Unknown as he may be beyond a few miles from his village he yet believes he is an important person. Perhaps that is why Buddhism has made so few converts in this land. He is a personality! Has he not a god, or gods, to do him service?

Sacrifices are made to these deities, generally a fowl. The blood may be smeared on the portion of the anatomy supposed to be under protection. If it is an internal organ, the blood may be swallowed. The sacrifices may be irregular and infrequent, but the devotion is not. At the start of a journey and at its conclusion, upon going hunting and returning, and sometimes in the very middle of these, or whilst building or planting or marketing or feasting or marrying or even dying, a moment of thought is given to them; a moment of propitiation. For they are quick to resent neglect. The man whose axe slips and cuts him, the woman who burns herself as she lifts the pot from the fire-stones, the child

who trips and falls, knows that this is his or her punishment, and, grateful for the lightness of it, warmly vows to be more faithful in the future.

The Imps. This group, a very large one, is of minor deities ranging from those strong enough to be devils to those which might be likened to sprites and fairies. Such makes a fair classification of them, they are imps and sprites and fairies.

The imps are so distinctly hostile and so continuously evil-minded that they may be denominated devils, but not after the order of the Christian *Satan* or the Moslem *Iblis.* They have nothing like the power of those majestic but malignant deities. Their inferiority is not through lack of initiative but through lack of freedom. They are the servants of other and greater gods. The utmost they can do is to torment, although that can be hard to bear, as is illustrated by the cry of a sorely troubled Congolese, who, not being able to explain why fate was so unkind to him, declared his life was *nkadi ampamba*, as bitter, as nasty, as distasteful, as objectionable, as if ruled by the white man's devil!

They may be distinguished by colours, as the black god of the Mende people who brings disease, and by ugliness of shape, as are the *Ya Ch'a* of the Chinese and the *Yakshas* of the Hindoos. The Ibo know them as *mmoatia*, tiny, distorted things, humped and without necks, with limbs far too long for their bodies, feet turned backward, and animal body between human head and extremities. The Ashanti call them *sasabonsam*, creatures of fearsome aspect, with long, bristly hair and bloodshot eyes with feet pointing both ways, that inhabit the densest of the forests and that are the most hostile of all the minor deities. They are also the Ibo *obunikes*, the servants of the evil *Ekwensu* and mischief-makers of malignancy, outrivalling that of the Chinese *shên.*

They can be deceived. They can be made to believe that a parcel of grass and a few human hairs thrown into the river is the drowned body of the child they have been troubling, and so be diverted to other quarries, or that a little fowl's blood on the path is that of the man or the woman to whom they have brought disease, and so think their work is done. The mothers of ailing children make a doll, and nurse and wash, oil it and feed it and croon over it, in the open air, their own weaklings being safely hidden all the time, and this they do because the imps will think the doll is the baby and expend upon the senseless thing all their malignity. They are said to be most susceptible to these "mistakes" at certain hours, notably at sunset and sunrise.

They are themselves deceivers. A Belgian Congo story illustrates this. "When the chief of Kisala was dying a priestess of the dead (*ngang' a mvumbi*) held a séance for him. At the beginning of the 'manifestations' she enquired the name of the spirit communicating.

"'*Nsingi*,' came the answer.

"'Why are you angry with the chief?'

"'Because when he went to Lala's funeral he misbehaved himself at the graveside.'

"'What must we then do to save his life?'

"'You must get such and such a medicine,' replied *Nsingi*, 'and when he has taken it he will get well again.'

"They procured the medicine at once, but it did not save the chief, and when he died the wits and wags of the town did not hesitate to impeach, not the genuineness of the priestess or her craft, but the veracity of *Nsingi*."

There is little or no cohesion amongst them. They are always at feud, individually or party against party. And, like the legionaries of old, they can

MANNEKEH OFFICIALS REPRESENTING IMP DEITIES.

be set against each other in battle, or like the gladiators in fights to the death, in the interests of those who pay them.

These are the deities who are said to "inhabit" the sacred medicines of the societies, that of KATAHWIRA being described by a word, *suman*, meaning the imp's home. Like Asmodeus in his bottle, their release can only be consummated by the personal touch of a Gil Blas-like priest.

The *sprites* most often furnish characters and themes for the folklore stories. They may also be mischief-makers, but they are jocular and irresponsible in its accomplishment. They inflict petty annoyances, upsetting boiling pots, pulling off the garments of the severely respectable, and frightening people out of their wits by sudden and unexpected appearances. Some merit the title of "a regular bad lot" for they come stealthily by night and "seize the heart of a sleeper," which they "squeeze with all their might . . . if the sleeper wakens in time all is well and he may call it a nightmare, but if he does not, his life is pressed out of him and he is found dead in the morning."

This propensity for "practical joking" is because these sprites are human as well as divine. They know how to irritate men and they know how to please men because of a "bit of humanity in them." No attempt is made to explain how and why they gained, or were given, this dual nature.

It is believed, as it is amongst the Japanese, that there are more good sprites than bad.

The *fairies* are wholly for the benefit of mankind. Those known to the Lobi of the Upper Volta, *Kponintan*, *Dakon*, *Zogra*, *Lampo*, *Suga*, *Timpo* and their companions, pursue robbers, frighten talebearers and punish slanderers. Images are made of them, of wood or stone, spotted with red and white washes as are made also of the Temne *Nomori* and the Mende

Nomoli, squat elfish little beings with queer-shaped heads, who are said to eat red rice from a bowl they carry on their knees and to commune with their beneficiaries in dreams. Some families in Sierra Leone make quite clever images of these in steatite or soap-stone, that became familiar to many in England during the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley.

Temne Nomori.

These are the children's special friends, and therefore most seen by them and by the sympathetic eyes of mothers. The Congolese describe them as tiny, old men with extravagant ears and sprightly little ladies dressed in blossoms, who make homes out of fungus, flit over the countryside like butterflies, and vanish at the first breath of mistrust. A Congo mother takes her new-born babe to the nearest stream to watch her drop a sprinkling of salt and chalk and flour, " the three white things " or things of innocence, on a leaf and launch it on the tide. Then, as that frail laden barque floats away, she murmurs a prayer of gratitude to the fairies for the gift of her babe and of appeal to them to accept and to bless her offering.

AFTER-DEATH SPIRITS

The continuity of the spirit called life, or what is better known as the immortality of the soul of man, is a strongly-held tenet in the religion of the African.

Death may bewilder and perplex him for a moment, but it cannot destroy this fundamental of his faith. It is unthinkable to him that his father

or his mother, the headman of his village or the chief of his tribe, can be here with him to-day, and to-morrow have abruptly vanished for ever. The one who has exercised an important influence upon him, whatever the nature of that influence, will go on exercising it, *must* go on exercising it, no matter what difference death makes in the medium of that influence. To think otherwise would be treachery to the dead.

Influence is only another word for personality. They have no word for the *ego*, but they believe in it. It may be breath, for a breathing body is a live one, and when breathing stops it is a dead one; or it may be intelligence (the idiot is one who has no intelligence and, therefore, he ends altogether at death), but whether breath or intelligence, or any other thing, that which makes the man is eternal. Eternal because indestructible.

That is what is taught in the puberty schools, and whatever else may be added that belief never fails.

There may be an attempt made to explain the spirit of man in other terms. The Tshi-speaking tribes say that there is a superior spirit, the *Kra*, or life-power, and an inferior one, the *Srahman*, ghost or shadow. Their Ga-speaking neighbours divide the *Kra* into two *Kla*, one male and one female, one good and one bad. The superior spirit, say the Yoruba, is the one that leaves the body at death, the inferior the one that wanders away during sleep. During sleep, say the Temne, the lower spirit has adventures, and these we call dreams. It returns, and the body wakens. Therefore, it is dangerous to wake anyone suddenly lest this spirit should be too much occupied by its pleasures to return quickly. The feeling of drowsiness on awaking is because of a tardy return, as is also the dull look that remains for a moment in the eyes.

But sleep is one thing and death is quite another, say the Congolese. Only when the superior spirit leaves the body does death occur.

Death is a journey to God, say the Batwa. The *okra*, soul or life, of the Ashanti-Akan leaves its *ntoro*, familiar place or body; it climbs the steep hill to *Asamandow*, the place of ghosts. The *ilaw-maw*, life-principle, of the Ibo goes on a "great adventure." The journey is first to the river that ends the world of this life, there to be interviewed by the tribal gods who guard the bridge that spans the river. There is always a little delay by that bridge. The tribal gods must interview the ancestral spirits. The tribal gods are not kind. They frighten the seeking spirit. More than that, they may beat and injure the seeking spirit. They may drive it back again to its body. When that happens, the illness is prolonged and intensified; there may be loss of will-power, leading to what is known as "second childhood," or loss of body-power, that may be called paralysis, or the beaten spirit returning, frightened, languid and nervous, may induce in the body that bruised feeling that malarial sufferers know so well.

"Crossing the bridge," as the Koranko call it, is part of the journey. On the other side is the place of the spirits, the place where they stay until they are given guidance along their road. They are not confined to that place, they can wander back to the scenes of their earthly life, but they cannot get further along the road for a time.

They can communicate with those they left behind, the earth-living members of their family or those specially gifted as mediums, explaining their condition and making known their wants and wishes. These communications may come as dreams, or as a "voice" that can only be interpreted by officials of the local society. Such officials may be trained

or they may be members of families long known as able to "honour the message." They may be of either sex. Generally they "translate" whilst in a cataleptic state of trance. The messages received vary from peevish complaints about personal discomforts to lengthy prophecies concerning coming disaster.

Some mediums say that the spirits emanate a slight glow, like a far-off fire seen through the night.

At first the after-death spirits seem to be merely homeless members of their one-time families. They retain the old form and voice. They suffer hunger and thirst. They like the same food that they used to do. They are afflicted with pain, know loss of strength, and are liable to accident. That of crippling may be very lamentable to them because rarely recovered from. They keep, too, the instincts and prejudices that marked their former character. Therefore food is put in conspicuous places for their sustenance, items of village news are narrated to them, and advice is both sought from them and given to them. Yet all know that this period is a temporary one.

If it lasts too long, remonstrance is made. "Spirit of So-and-So," says the society official brought in to tackle the problem, "Remember your friendship with us. Be reasonable. Be gracious. Accept your fate, and take your leave of this village (or home or body). Go free. None here wish you harm and none here should receive harm from you." If there is no response to this entreaty, command is used, and if that fails various ceremonies may be indulged in to teach the spirit its duty. If the corpse is still unburied, it is taken away from the house some distance, placed on a bier and a thatch put over it. Then at midnight all the family arise, wash themselves in a specially prepared fluid, and march about.

They march round the house within and without, as did the bereaved family during the *Lemuria* Festival of ancient Rome, as described by Ovid, seven times (Koranko) or nine times (Bakongo). They make sweeping motions with their arms, or link hands in a circle about the house and shout a warning to the recalcitrant spirit. Some of the prepared fluid is sprinkled on the threshold, or a trail of fruit and berries may be made from the house door to the nearest bush, or the building may be circled by fetishes, or black and white cloth may be tied about the kingpost and that and the floor sprinkled with the blood of a fowl. If all this is unsuccessful, the family, helped by their neighbours, may spend the next night in creating a fearful din by hand and tongue or drum, and, if the "haunting" does not then cease, the house may be burned to the ground.

Similar scenes may be witnessed around graves. During this period some spirits remain near where their bodies have been buried. That is why food is so often found placed there. There may also be a bamboo rod thrust through the earth to facilitate communication. There may also be articles of clothing, both in the grave and on it, domestic utensils and ornaments. But since the various protecting European authorities have made general cemeteries compulsory the old ceremonies around the grave have fallen into disuetude, for "the law" may consider them "brawling" and punish those taking part.

The chiefs belonging to Poro and Mannekeh have a person on their staff who is said to be their spirit or *krifi*. This person, sometimes known as Sanko, lives apart, and when appearing in public wears a mask of leather and brass, with fibre and strips of leopard skin hanging from the base, also decorations of fibre ruffles and net anklets with

MANNEKEH SANKO
(The Spirit of a Chief)

fibre tops. He carries four sticks tied together (*bonkoloma*), like those supporting the PORO axe. When the chief dies his Sanko disappears, walking out of the village backwards, and is said never to be seen again.

There are many theories as to what next happens to the after-death spirits. There may be a probationary period of some years; three, say the Lobi, seven, say several Nigerian and Sierra Leonean tribes. This may be spent in servitude, as messengers from gods to men, or it may be a period of reincarnation. If the last, the spirits of those who lived evilly on earth are condemned to inhabit the bodies of base things like sharks, crocodiles or bush-pigs, whilst those who were of good character in life may re-enter human bodies. This belief gives rise to various ceremonies in which the society officials play conspicuous parts.

"Thy home is not here with human beings; it is with the beasts!" declares the official in such directional ceremonies, and he may add, if the spirit is of one who was especially objectionable in life, "Leopards await thee; their young require a nature like thine! Away to thine own, and let them welcome thee!" To the spirit of someone remembered as of gracious temperament he will say, "There is a babe born in this thy village, and there are babes about to be born: choose for thyself: but be not hasty in choice, for soon there may be a child in the household of the chief: but whatever your choice we shall be satisfied: for the babe you choose will become a person of honour and of good report." If there is a doubt in the case, the petition may be, "Before thee lie many paths: choose the one most fit for thee to travel: if it leads thee to what is is distasteful, bear with patience thy lot: if to what is pleasing, remember thy responsibilities: thy strength will be meted to thy need." Or it may

be put into this form, "The helpless are at thy feet: remember that innocence merits the gift of simplicity, and weakness should invite strength and soundness: remember also that craft should couple with cruelty and subtlety with savagery: thine is the choice and thine is the power and thou wilt go as the gods intended, but go in peace, and remember mercy." (All the above are actual petitions taken down as they were uttered by Ampora, Egbo, Si'mo, Tilang, and Yassi officials.)

Cases have been known where the sex of the chosen babe has not been that of the spirit taking possession of it, proved, of course, by "the likeness in the child's face," and wealth has been lavished in external fetish and internal medicine to correct the error; but whenever such happens there is no real remedy. "It was done with the best of intentions," they say, "and the result is in the keeping of the future."

There is a large consensus of opinion that either some of the after-death spirits, or all of them, after certain other experiences, inhabit a world of their own, in some element other than earth, and far removed from their former haunts. The Ibo spirit-land has its rivers and forests, its hills and towns and roads, all situate somewhere below the ground. They are of the same shape, size and colouring as those above ground, yet in an atmosphere so gloomy that eyes have to serve long apprenticeship before becoming accustomed to it. Both the Temne and Mende have sacred groves that take the place of houses, and Eden-like camps instead of towns in their spirit-land. Many tribes agree to mountains and abundance of water, and to the presence of domestic animals. There are music and drums, dancing, and laughter.

The "life" there is much the same as here.

There are enemies to avoid, for earthly feuds continue on the other side; there is fighting to enjoy, with woundings, defeats and victories, cowardice and courage; there are feasts and beer-drinks, hunting and marketing, labouring and resting, with times of pain and times of ease, and disappointment to sustain and pleasure to gain and keep. There are the same sorts of relationships, man and wife, father and mother, children, relatives, but a chief wife here may not be so there, and the mother of a chief or a headman may not be the ruler there that she is here. A result of the teaching of the European missions is seen in the adopted thought that "there" man is monogamous. There are the same dispositions as are known in this world. Whatever these spirits are, essence, vapour, shadow, sense, spirit, breath, force, fluid (the word varies but the meaning remains the same), and whatever their new surprises, their new changes of scene, their new joys or miseries, their new successes or troubles, triumphs or misfortunes, songs or lamentations, they go on for ever and ever with the inherent nature, the disposition known on earth.

This state of Elysium gained, the ghosts are now ancestral spirits, and as such play the important part of heavenly mediators for their earthly brethren. All their experiences have been to fit them for this and they now have understanding far beyond anything possible in this life, understanding and sympathy that never fail. Hence the prayers already noted in this chapter, and these which follow—

Mende prayer uttered at the birth of a child.

(All assembled) "O fathers and ancestors, and all who are of the near and far past: we cry to thee to let this child be safely born."

(Father) "If I have sinned, be merciful, and

if thou canst not be merciful then punish me, slay me: but heal this woman and let this child live."

(Father of the woman) "This is my daughter: she is in your hands: spare her life, and give her a living child."

Aro prayer uttered when a child was sick.

(Mother) "O spirits of the past, this little one I hold is my child: she is your child also, therefore, be gracious unto her." (Women, chanting) "She has come into a world of trouble: sickness is in this world, and cold and pain: the pain you knew: the sickness you were familiar with."

(Mother) "Let her sleep in peace, for there is healing in sleep: let none among you be angry with me or with my child."

(Women) "Let her grow: let her become strong: let her become full-grown: then will she offer such a sacrifice to you that will delight your hearts."

Kafu-Bullom prayer during the illness of a man.

(Wife) "O spirits of my husband; his fathers of the long ago: let thy breath be cool upon his brow."

(Relatives) "We pray you, O friendly ones: gain for this our sick one the goodwill of those that bless and heal."

A general prayer uttered, with others, by the Grand Tasso of Poro at the opening of an annual Festival.

"O good and innocent dead, hear us: hear us, thou guiding all-knowing ancestors: thou art neither blind nor deaf to this life we live: thou didst thyself once share it: help us therefore for the sake of our devotion, and for our good."

Dom Henrique Nteyekenge, the late King of Congoland, whenever he mobilized his army for war used to lead them first to the graves of his predecessors,

and there, on his knees, pray for success. Said a traveller who saw this, "To see a whole clan of heathens on their knees at a graveside holding communication with the dead is one of the most impressive sights seen in Africa."

CHAPTER XII

ETHICAL TEACHING AND THE NEW LIFE

Teaching concerning Adultery, Theft, Murder—Respect to Elders and Chiefs—Co-operation—Courage — Sympathy — Manliness —The Closing Scenes — Homeward Processions — Privileges of Young Initiates—Some Impressions.

The new initiate, renamed and taught a new tongue, introduced to society rites and signs, trained in society beliefs, is now ready for the "final words." These are usually of an ethical nature.

ETHICAL TEACHING

In discussing the ethical teaching of the puberty schools one is irresistibly reminded of the statement, "Often in the centre of purest heathendom is found some striking proviso, the moral quality of which is on a par with some of the best standards in Christendom."

The African punishment for adultery, theft and murder remains what it has been for many centuries —death. That the punishment is not more often carried out is the fault of the over-law of the governing powers.

In Ndembo "laws are taught that are almost exact translations of the Hebrew Commandments." The death penalty used to be inflicted on both co-respondent and offending women; even now "adultery is severely punished." "Intention is often

punished as severely as the crime. King Alvaro Nsinga-nkanga of the Congo executed Mbundu Amfumu for giving a leaf of tobacco to one of his wives, though he had gone no further than placing the leaf on a stone, at a respectable distance from the woman." In NKIMBA and NKAMBA "chastity is enjoined on all the members."

The officials of MUNGI teach chastity as "a working condition of fetishism. A man's faithfulness to his responsibilities ensures his success in life. If he is habitually a failure he is presumed to be unfaithful, and the punishment is expulsion from the society or a heavy fine." BUNDU teaches that "a wife's infidelity will cause the illness of her husband, or prevent his recovery from an illness." YASSI teaches that an unfaithful wife nullifies "the powers of her own dearly bought charms (fetishes), and so lays her open to any disease that may be floating around." Moreover "she risks the welfare of her children, turns her own fortunes into calamities and induces a multitude of other unpleasant things to happen that theoretically cannot happen as long as she remains a faithful spouse."

The general attitude of the societies towards theft is that already mentioned of OKONKO, in which association even so great a man as an *Awzaw* is degraded on conviction. That towards murder is well expressed in the NDEMBO proverb, "*Konso on' ovond' o nkw' andi ntwikila.*" (Whoever kills his fellow must pay for it with his head.)

Respect to elders. A parable taught in the NKIMBA puberty school is as follows: "When one makes the first incision in a palm, the sap obtained is sweet but without strength, and to only a few is it palatable. Day by day, however, it becomes less sweet and more strong, less a drink for children and more a drink for men. We are like the palm wine. Some say, youth lacks wisdom and old age lacks sweetness,

but we say, youth is sweet, strength is stimulating, experience is best of all; therefore, honour experience."

The Duala boys of YUGU when dismissed to their homes are commanded: "Now you are grown, honour your elders. If you find anything on their path remove it, or if you have meat share it with those older than yourselves; it is not good for them to have to ask for it. If the people are to praise you, let them do it for your goodness and your kindness. Never be too busy to listen to a request, nor too selfish to deny your indebtedness to others."

The boys in the PORO schools have "much good advice given them; they are warned against selfishness, and are instructed in the way to return polite answers to their elders."

Respect to chiefs. The boys just named are taught "their duties towards the community and the chiefs." The NDEMBO boys are taught the proverb, "A chief's finger cannot be thrust aside—except when it is poked into your eye." That is, a chief has dominion, but he must not abuse it if he wishes to retain the respect of his people. In native parlance "his court must not be like a fowl-run, where the birds show scant courtesy to a cockroach"; nor must it be like a tree that is "so ill-rooted that it is felled by the first wind that blows." "The king," says EGUNGUN, "must not pluck a feather that should not be plucked." He must not be unjust, for "injustice soon ruins a country." He must not, say the DYORO men, "make two wounds on a head that only deserves one." He must not "eat a one-ear'd pig" (AMPORA); in other words, he must know both sides of a question. He must not be partial either in public or private (BORI). He must not confuse right with might, killing "every ant to slay one" (SEMBE), for "he should

BUNDU TUTORS

know the ant that bit him before starting out to kill it."

Co-operation. EGBO says, "Be slow to quarrel, be obedient to parents and elders, be not garrulous, think of manly things, think and act as a man." MBORKO teaches this parable, "The bean-creeper winds itself round the grass and the grass winds itself round the creeper." None lives to himself alone. NGBE says, the folly of one harms others "when the tree moves the branches sway." "One frightened fowl reveals the hiding place of all." AFA declares that evil is often more contagious than good: "evil spawns: good is often childless." ETURI says, "one finger can scatter the nuts, but it takes them all to gather them again."

Courage. PORO teaches that a brave spirit and an upright character can repel and even exorcise evil, whether that evil be of man or god. Of OGBONI it has been said, "On the whole, the instruction must be considered decidedly salutary and wholesome, though it naturally varies with the personalities of the chief members . . . it teaches courage as, perhaps, no other influence in African life *could* teach it." Of EKKPE it is stated, "The novices have instilled into them that bravery is a desirable qualification for life."

Sympathy. EYO teaches "a set of rules with wide range, embracing modesty and ethics. The youth is commanded to respect the privacy of his parents; to be just to his enemy; to help those who are in danger. They say to him, you surely would not leave a drowning man to perish without trying to help him! And again, Suffer not the lone man to be overpowered by several!"

Manliness. In the "passing out" of a new KUFONG initiate the Head says, "The members having thought you worthy of being admitted to their ranks, you now take farewell of all things

childish; toys and playthings are yours no longer, they are womanly things; your future lies with men; consort and converse with them, emulate the good you see in them and shun the evil, let all your words and actions from this time forth be always manly and courageous; only girls and babes are other; they are effeminate; you are masculine."

In a similar rite the *Grand Tasso* of PORO says, "You are become men; act as such, that you may be loved as such; forget not to be facile of instruction and of a docile disposition, but be brave and true also; then will there be a good report of you in the land."

The *Ikina Nyimi*, Royal Prohibitions, of NKANDA taught in the puberty school of that society are as follows:

"Respect and obey the king and the members of the royal family."

"Respect and obey your father and mother."

"Avoid offending the feeling of propriety your parents hold sacred."

"If your father's clothes are in disorder, tell him, but if the disordered clothing is that of your mother leave it for your sister to tell. Never bring shame on your mother."

"Respect the dead bodies you meet."

"When you are married, do not ill-treat your wife, and never meddle in her or other people's quarrels."

"Be just to your enemy: rescue him when he is in danger, and never go out of your way to get him into trouble."

"Watch to take the weakest side: always side with the one when fighting against odds."

"To kill in war is to defend oneself and show valour, but to kill at other times is to imitate the beasts."

"Stealing is undignified: if you covet a thing, ask for it: if it is refused, go without it."

"There are no rules between man and wife, but there are understandings: honour them: and keep in remembrance the tribal laws concerning conjugal fidelity."

"Gambling is exciting, but it is precarious: what you lose might give comfort to your family."

"To tell lies to another member of the society is to pronounce yourself outside its membership."

THE CLOSING SCENES

The time for closing the puberty school is fixed by the same methods as is their opening, but NDEMBO has a method not shared by others. The officials put live fish into a pool made within the enclosure, and if the fish die before the day appointed it is altered for another.

The closing scenes are full of ceremony, mostly of religious significance. The fetishes used during the retreat are hung upon the sacred tree, as are those of dead men on the forest *ongons* of the Siberian Buriats. The seclusion garb is burned or buried. Presents are given to the tutor-officials and the Head. These are fruit and flowers in ANDOMBA, reminding one of the Liberalia Festival of the Roman boys when the toga prætexta was laid aside and the toga liberia or virilis, the man's garb, assumed. BOVIOWAH boys bring goats, at the sacrifice of which the following prayer is offered, "We come unto you, our ancestors, who begot us: we come unto you with this our present: receive what is your own: eat this gift of ours: call your companions, ancient and honourable as yourselves, and give them their due portions." (Here follow the mention of the names of past members of the families

of the young initiates, each of whom are informed that some portion, selected by traditional custom as most fitting, is for them.) "You, our ancestors, first in our thoughts because greatest of all we know, we come to you for blessing: rejoice with your companions, but in your rejoicing forget not those who bring this gift: we give you honour, give us benediction."

There are additional purifications, some elaborate, some held at night. When they are in darkness, as the initiates come up out of the water, a fire is lit and the scene illuminated by burning brands. This is known in some BUNDU lodges, and in AYAKA. In KEMAH a prayer of the following sentiment is offered, "We wash you from all uncleanness of the past; we cleanse you of the errors and mistakes of childhood; from now you follow a new path; follow that path to the end."

There is generally a final interview with the Head or his Deputy, when the "final words" are uttered. (Some of these have been already reported.) This may be accompanied by fresh anointings. In KUFONG the initiates are brought to the *Mother*, who rests his hands for a moment on the upturned brows and blesses the youths. In PORO the *Grand Tasso* anoints whilst blessing. Whilst the *Mother of Kufong* blesses, the officials rub their hands down the bodies of the youth to "expel all evil."

There is a great deal of shaving and hairdressing, the hair taken away being sometimes carefully hidden or burned or scattered to the winds. That of the OYENI boys is put into clay balls and buried at the threshold of the tomb of some tribal saint.

All leave the sacred enclosure along an eastern path, and most actually leave the bush by passing through an arch made by tying together two saplings.

Most initiates are carried out, although not in the same manner as they were brought in, being mounted on the backs of the officials. The PORO boy steps out of the bush over the lowered hand of an official. Those of AMPORA are balanced on the feet of the officials, and so come out backwards, their hands resting on the shoulders of the carriers. The officials of KINKI "lift and swing their initiates over as wide a space from bush to road as the strength of the officials allows." BUNDU girls stand for a moment on the palm of a tutor.

Some come forth dressed and decorated and immediately become part of the procession that takes them home, and others come forth nude and are dressed on the road outside the bush. Of the latter are those of BUNDU. Early in the morning they are brought out clad only in loincloths, and are met by friends who bring clothing supplied by prospective husbands or friends. "Presents of clothes, jigitas, handkerchiefs, scent, pomade, and small looking-glasses are made." "Some are dressed in ropes of *piso* and trimmed with bugle beads of thin bamboo, their hair piled high and ornamented by black seeds like grapes, their bodies greased and shining and looking like polished ebony, decorated with silver charms, plaques, armlets and leg-bangles." If they are free-born they may wear the additional ornament of a leopard's tooth. Those of the Vassa country add shoulder sashes of fetish objects. Some are almost hidden by many festoons of green twigs and blossoms.

Their YASSI sisters are equally fine in white caps and dresses of new cloth. Before leaving the bush these girls have had a little ceremony in which the dolls made and nursed in retreat are burned, and now they carry new and wonderful dolls sent them by their friends, dolls of European and American

manufacture that are dressed in imitation of those who carry them.

The Butwa youths are anointed with special oils and made fragrant with camwood dust. Nkanda boys have their hair fancifully dressed and their clothes perfumed, and each carries a special seed to give to the Head in what is called the *tuki mbuli* ceremony. Iban-Isong paint elaborate designs on the limbs of their girls, and many societies mark the bodies of the initiates in this final ceremony with their secret signs.

Ebere girls wear costly dresses of silk handkerchiefs, pleated, and with the corners rosetted, and ribbon ceintures. Bands of fur, three to four inches broad, sewed with cowries and beads, garter their bare legs below the knees, and in addition there are bangles and ankle-bands covered with tiny brass ornaments that clash musically as they walk.

Okonko girls are smeared all over with vermilion red, and bound about the waist with ropes of tightly twisted cloth and threaded cowrie shells, with tiny bells attached. Rings of brass adorn their legs, graduated from the ankles to just above the knees. The elaborate coiffure is a mound of hair and clay, of powdered charcoal and palm-oil, moulded into a shape resembling the crest of a Roman helmet, coming well over the middle of the forehead and extending backward into the nape of the neck, embellished with delicately patterned, plastered curls with mother-of-pearl and brass ornaments. These fine head-dresses are spoiled sometimes by a piece of goat-fat being laid over them. The tufted end of a cow's tail is carried, mounted on a leather handle, embossed, and with an inset mirror.

Ndembo boys are washed clean of their plasters of clay, then anointed and their hair cut. The hair taken away is cast into the already-mentioned fish

pool, and a tonsure is made on each boy's head to represent that pool. They are dressed in bright, showy clothes, their skin well dusted with camwood powder, and they are decorated with dangling tassels of palm-fibre. The PENDA-PENDA youths wear yellow robes, caps of animal skin adorned with feathers, and carry a lance in each hand on which are tufts of horsehair. The girls are put into black cloaks, and their hair carefully coiffured.

In the *Homeward Processions*, officials and friends take part, and there is much singing and shouting, also dancing and drumming. The officials are in their smartest disguises. The NKANDA boys march behind groups of seniors, each representing a Bushongo comitatus. The OKONKO girls are each followed by a "maid of honour," girls who "came out" the previous year. These are smeared with camwood dye and carry a basket into which spectators are invited to put presents. Older graduates follow, some leading the goats that are the payment of the officials, and others bearing the bodies of like animals that have been sacrificed. The BUNDU girls walk in order of seniority, those having spent the longest time in the bush coming last. A guardian is on either side of each new initiate, holding up canopies of country cloth. The Head leads the way, and behind her comes *Na-Sin ka Bundu* (The Voice of Bundu; also the official who adjudicates in petty disputes in retreat), and women with drums. There are drummers interspersed amongst the girls all along the line. On arriving at the entrance to the town the Head, through

Egwuwu Costume of Ayaka.

her Voice, calls upon all the affianced men to put tobacco into the society basket. Parents also put in for the girls not betrothed. "Then follows a dance round the town, after which the 'small wives' are put into a specially made barri (a women's house), and all the rest of the people go home. In the barri the husbands-to-be inspect their chosen, putting a shilling in the mouth of the girl they have come to see and a tobacco leaf on her shoulder. The girls are kept enclosed several days, and when they are released *Bundu* is over for another year."

The ANDOMBA procession is a long, waving moving bower of palm-branches held above the initiates.

When the head of the procession is seen there is a mighty shout from the assembled relatives and friends, and a rush of parents towards their children; but that rush stops ere the procession is reached. The parents stop, hold out arms of invitation, and drop upon their knees, and in that attitude wait for the ceremony to stop. Those kneeling parents are the first tribute to the new manhood and womanhood coming out of the bush.

"The NDEMBO procession marches round the market-place with stolid, indifferent faces. In the crowd parents recognize their children in the procession, and boys and girls point out their sisters and brothers, and excitedly call out their names; but not a face in the procession lights up with recognition, not a muscle moves to express delight, for these *resurrected* ones are not supposed to know anything of their former life, or relatives or friends. Any one showing feeling or recognition is liable to a flogging, or a heavy fine. They have been well schooled for this hour."

"At last the march is finished, and the *doctors* introduce the *resurrected* ones to their families. Those who have *died ndembo* are supposed not to know anything, or anybody they knew previous

to their entrance into the bush. They pretend not to know their parents, their brothers and sisters, relatives, friends, and former acquaintances. Even their mother tongue is now new to them. The look of the town, its houses, roads, trees, spaces, has been forgotten. They have to be introduced to it all, be given explanations of it, be told what it is and what it is for. 'This is your father,' they are solemnly told, or 'That path leads to the river where you will get your water,' or 'We call this a calabash, and you will use it for drinking purposes,' and so on. A heavy punishment is laid upon those initiates who, in a careless, forgetful moment show they know anything or anyone not brought to their notice in this ceremonious and society manner."

The young initiates have many privileges for the first few weeks. They are the monarchs of all they survey; *onye-nwe-obodo*, lords of creation, as it is said in AYAKA. They of NDEMBO "demand gifts of the people they meet, want everything they see, and, if it is denied them, try to take it by force. . . . So well do they play their new part that food has to be masticated for them, and they have to be fed like babes." The freshly released PORO lads have a period of licence in which they are allowed to spoil the gardens of the village. The AYAKA youths rush madly about, "screeching out warnings on their *igwe*, a small reed instrument hidden in the mouth. They enter whatever houses they choose, and tumble about not only utensils but the owners of the same if not mollified by gifts." NKIMBA and HOMOWO boys impose a tithe on the people of the market-place; the Accra boys shouting to the stall-holders, "*Wo aye eko!*" (We will eat some!), and are allowed to take fruit and foodstuffs without payment.

Sometimes these "virgin-spirits" expect even white men to tremble in their presence—and then there is trouble.

After a short time, the seven days of UKUKU seems the longest period, the excitement of the "resurrection" passes, and the new initiates merge into the normal life of the districts in which they live.

SOME IMPRESSIONS

"The schools satisfy their undying love, their small-boy delight in mystery and exclusion and significance of ritual and dressing-up. There are in them solemnity and importance, feathers and beating of drums, a holiday air, adventure, excitement, and to be initiated into them is to have special and omnipotent power over others."

"It is a hard school, this puberty school, but it is going to take a long time to ween African youth from love of it. He forgets the hardness and remembers only its joys and secrecy. And the society is like unto its school. Many rules to obey, stringent rules, and punishments for their infringement, heavy punishments, but lasting joys also and eternal secrecy."

"In a world that is becoming somewhat Utopian in its views regarding education in the Gold Coast, it is refreshing to see that so experienced an educationalist as Father Acker, of the Catholic Mission, is against the total abolition of the 'bush schools' in which so many Gold Coasters obtained the rudiments of their education. . . . Father Acker's views may be gathered from his recommendations that bush schools should be left open and recognised, that they should be run on parallel, but not equal, lines with 'Ordinance' schools, that the new rules concerning buildings, teachers, and salaries should not be applied, and that the manager should be registered instead of the teacher. In other words, all bush schools with the slightest claim to be useful

would be saved from closure, and Africans would not be prevented entirely from obtaining the rudiments of education . . . the bush schools have at least a claim to be recognised so long as there is no adequate educational provision for the mass of the people."

CHAPTER XIII

THE OLDER SOCIETIES

The Muhammedan Societies—The Muhammedan-Pagan Societies—The Pagan Law-God Societies.

(1) THE MUHAMMEDAN SOCIETIES

SIRRI. The "Society of the Magicians," claims to be the most ancient Muhammedan secret society in Africa, and one of the oldest in the world, the legends of its origin stating that its officials, after the order of priest-prophet-physician-pharmacist, were known two to three thousand years B.C., and that there is a reference to it in what is known as the "Lesser Berlin Papyrus," that dates from about 1600 B.C. "Sirri Men," magicians and sorcerers, are found amongst the peasants of most of the northern states from Egypt to Morocco, the Sudan, Rio de Oro, Senegal, Gambia, French Guinea, and as far south as Nigeria, mostly amongst the Fula, Hausa, Mandingo and Susu peoples.

Its officials claim to have occult powers and the inherited secret of making medicines from precious stones, emerald, lapis lazuli, sapphire, from jade and certain porcelains, and from glass.

There seems to be no organisation, as such, but local members hold meetings, ceremonious and deeply mysterious, and use passwords that are said to be words of ancient languages, and signs for mutual recognition.

Occasionally women are found amongst the initiated, but the majority of the members are men.

Javia Kartas. Influencing the Berbers of Morocco and some of the Western States.

Said to have been founded by Al Kahina, Queen of the Berber Djeraous tribe of the Aures Mountains, a people that had adopted Judaism and therefore were opposed to the invading Arabs from religious as well as patriotic motives. They were without success until led by Al Kahina, a woman of old Berber stock, with a masculine instinct and a feminine charm. Known as Dilieya Kahina, or Delieya the Kahina, she was, according to those who loved or feared her, priestess, diviner, doctor and sorceress. About A.D. 696 she fought and defeated Hasan-ben-Numan, who commanded an army of forty thousand men for the Unmayad Khalif, who until then had been victorious. She was at last betrayed by a youth she had saved in battle and adopted, and was slain in defending herself.

With her died Berber independence but, according to the legend, her followers continued the organisation she had formed, and it, through persecution, became a secret society. Its Head, although a man, bears the title *The Kahina*.

It is of male membership, admission at any adult age, and very exclusive.

Qaïrowan (Kairoüan). Influencing the Tunisians, and Berbers in Algeria, Tekna, Rio de Oro, Senegal, and other Western States.

Said to have been founded by Ogbar-ben-Nagi in the first century, and to owe a great deal to the after leadership of a Ben Aïssa, by whose name the society is sometimes known. Some of its legends are similar to those told of Masubori.

Members gain merit by refusing all earthly comfort and happiness that bar the path of spiritual purity. They perfect their indifference to pain by

torturing their bodies, sometimes making a show of their sufferings. They use passwords, and obey a code of rules that prescribes severe penalties for lapse of obedience.

It is of male membership, very selective, and it is said that there is always a long waiting list of those who desire admission.

Masubori. Influencing the Hausa peoples of the north and north-western states.

Masubori Mask.

The name denotes "spirit-possessed." All the members are supposed to be good mediums. Each *maibori*, member, represents a *bori*, spirit, either that of a *yam*, human, or a *dowakin*, animal. The former ride the latter. There are *doki*, male, and *godiya*, female, animal spirits.

The Head of the Society, a woman, is called the *Arifa*, Priestess, or *Sarauniya*, Chieftainess. The office is given to a widow or a divorcee. She acts as the caretaker of the temple, generally a hired room. The Tunisian officials include *Arifa Karama*, Little Priestess, and a *Magajiya*, Heiress or Helper. In Tripoli there are *Galadimiya*, Princess, *Uwar Sarika*, Kingly Mother, and *Kalankuwa*, Charmer. A *Bokaye*, Medicine Man, is supreme over some branches. For service at festivals there are appointed a *Sarakin Samiri*, Chief of Youths, a *fagge* or general servant, and *mairuwa*, water-carriers. The Gobir, Nigeria, branch, that includes Asben members, has a great number of officials, Princess and her Assistant musicians, dancers, boka (doctors), and *bori* messengers. These are drawn from both male and female members.

A legend of its origin is similar to one told of the

foundation of the Tunisian Qaïrowan sect. Sidi Sa'id (to whose tomb in Tunis the northern members pay annual pilgrimage) stood on his house-steps, poignard in hand, and observed that he had been ordered by divine revelation to slay a man. Who among them all, he asked of the crowd below, loved him enough to become the sacrifice? A man went up the steps; he was taken within the door; a great cry was heard, and blood ran down the steps. Sidi Sa'id returned and demanded another volunteer. A second man disappeared within that door, and again a cry was heard, and fresh blood ran. Again and again the venerable saint made his request, until forty men had gone willingly to death. The door was then thrown open, and the forty men were seen to be standing within the house, safe and well, forty slain sheep lying at their feet. The legend claims those vigorously chosen forty as the founders of the society.

There are many likenesses between this society and Mori and Bori, the latter being probably an offshoot.

It is of mixed adult membership, with branches or lodges for children.

Mori. Influencing the Fula, Mandingo, and Susu peoples.

A powerful religious organisation of wide-spread influence, and of priestly caste.

In some districts it is of adult mixed membership, and in others admits males to full membership and females to an honorary branch.

Bori. Influencing the Nupe, Igbiri, and other Hausa tribes of Southern Sudan and Northern Nigeria.

The name is a well-known word, found in several West Coast languages, used for an after-death spirit.

It has many branches, and continues to flourish

although condemned and forbidden by the stricter Muhammedan authorities. Those of another sort give it a left-hand recognition in their districts by enforcing an annual poll-tax on the members.

The Head of the society, the *Sarakin Bori*, lives at Jega. His Deputy, the *Ayenge*, may be male or female. There is a Marshal, *Magajia*, and his Assistant *Uban Mufane*, a Messenger, *Dan Maiaba* (Little Flatterer), a Caterer, *Uwar Tuo*, (Mother of Porridge), a Shaver or Rubber, *Maigoge*, a Chief Musician, *Maikiddan Kwaria*, a Drummer, *Maikwaria*, a Chief Dancer, *Karua*, and several assistant dancers.

The society works through district lodges or temples, meeting in hired rooms. The ceremonies are elaborately ritualistic. Fees are paid both to the local executives and the Jega headquarters.

The members, known in some districts as *masubori*, are adults of both sexes. There are branch lodges for children.

Mahammah-Jamboh. (The "Mumbo-Jumbo" of the early explorers of the Niger.) Influences chiefly the Mandingo peoples. There are branches wherever this spirited and industrious people have founded colonies. Traces of it may be found as far north as Fez and as far south as Loanda.

The members claim it as the supreme secret society of Islam. It is protective and has purification rites.

It is of male membership, admitting at any adult age.

Kongcorong. Influencing both Mandingo and Susu peoples south and west of the Sudan.

One legend attributes its foundation to Mokanna (al-Moqanna), the "Veiled Man" of the Sudan, who a thousand years ago had a meteoric career as the conqueror of that land. Another declares it to have originated amongst the veiled hermits known long ago as inhabiting the caves in the Kong Mountains

of the Ivory Coast, whose first disciples came from the Bambara tribe. During modern times, however, the Susu members have been in the majority.

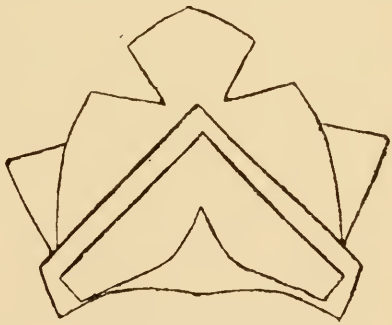
It is highly exclusive in membership, admits only male adults, but holds training schools for the sons of its members.

(2) MUHAMMEDAN-PAGAN SOCIETIES

PENDA-PENDA. Influencing the Baga and other Pagan tribes of French Guinea, and the Susu of that and neighbouring states.

Uses ritual suggesting contact with SI'MO and MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH. Claims great age, and is looked upon as the mother society of its kind.

Its Head is known as the *Juga-Nkah*. The novices are *sedasi* and the initiates, *nurti*. The chief officials have great power, and the secrets are well kept. It is elaborately organised. Amongst the many grades of membership are *dschemma*, councillors, *sibjan*, elders, (from whose ranks most of the officials are drawn), and *ferafir*, proved men. Some of the official offices are hereditary. Two of its minor grades are non-secret, and amongst the members of these most of its social-festival life is known.



Penda-Penda Cap.

It is of male adult membership, but there is an honorary branch for selected women and a training school for youths.

Three of its branches have become separate

societies of some importance, these being Dou of Senegal, Afa of Dahomey, and Sindungo of the Congo.

Dou. (Sometimes known as "Lou.") Influencing the Bambara and Bobo of Upper Senegal, with headquarters south of Timbuktu.

Has a large number of officials and grades. Much of its ritual suggests adoption from that of Penda-Penda, with which society its members are affiliated in an honorary fashion. The Bambara boy novices wear a cap similar in shape to those used in Masubori and Poro and some other associations.

It is of mixed adult membership, but holds occasional puberty schools for the children of members.

Afa. Influencing the Ewe-speaking Yoruba peoples of the Gold Coast and French Dahomey.

Said to have been originally a cult for the worship of *Ifa*, a Yoruba god, and for the practice of the astrological geomancy known under the same name. This claim is that of the Dahomi only, the Aulo (Auglawa) declaring the god worshipped to be *Aramfe*, the Yoruba supreme deity, and the Jeji, Krepi, and Mahi tribes acknowledging through the society a mythical patron who seems to be a combination of all their known gods.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty, and having women associates.

In conjunction with Sindungo the society has influenced many tribes in Senegal, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

Sindungo. Influencing the Loango of Angoy and the Kabinda of Portuguese Congo.

There is a language of the same name, written Si'ndungo, in Portuguese Angola, and the society is said to preserve in its secret speech some of the archaic words of this language, words so ancient as to sound foreign to modern, local ears.

The ritual contains Egyptian and Mosaic survivals. It is protective in influence.

It is of mixed, adult membership, but organises occasional puberty schools for the training of young members, who are admitted to a minor non-secret grade.

KATAHWIRA. Influencing the Aku (Yoruba) peoples of the Gold Coast.

Originally a phallic cult (*kata*, cover ; *awo*, generation), and retains some of the ancient signs. These may be seen in the mural decorations of the society-houses, especially those known in the district between Elmina and Accra. It possesses an elaborate ceremonial, and employs a host of officials. The initiates are known as *baba-alawo*. It has purification rites.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

KATAHWIRIBA. The women's branch of the above. May have been modelled on the lines of an ancient association of Ashanti women. Admits its members through a puberty school.

BELLI-PAARO. Influencing the Gbandi and Kpwesi, and other tribes of Liberia.

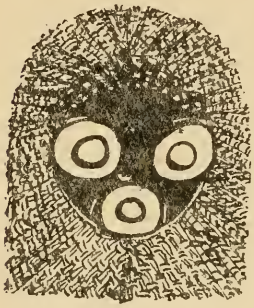
Founded by an old-time king of the Gbandi, whose trained and disciplined bodyguard became its first members. The occupant of the throne of this people is still the titular Head of the society, a Deputy elected by the council representing him at celebrations. The ritual has marked analogies with those of MAHAMMAH-JAMBOH and SI'MO.

The members of its supreme grade are in close affiliation with the civil governments of their districts, and its council forms a recognised court of justice. It is of male, adult membership, but admits sons of members to a non-secret grade after passing through the neighbouring SEMBE puberty school.

BOVIOWAH. Influencing the Basa, De, Gibi, Grebo, Nifu, Putu, Sikon, and other Kru tribes of

Liberia, and having lodges wherever these industrious tribes have settled.

Was originally a war band of Basa. It has a dual Headship, both males, one known as the *Worabanh* or War King, and the other as *Bovio* or Peace King. Amongst the officials are *Ibodio* and *Tibawah*, who act as counsel in the manner described in the chapter on Officials. One of the *Deyabo* or doctors wears a domed mask of wicker-work with round black and white face. The initiates are *kedibo*, youths, and two of the grades are *sedibo*, strong men, and *gnekbadi*, elders. It is of male membership, admitting between the ages of fourteen and twenty.



Boviowah Mask.

NAFERI. Influencing the Wakore and Wngara, Mandingo tribes of Upper Senegal.

It has become a strong rival to DOU, the influences of these two societies often clashing in the district known as the Niger Bend. It uses purification rites and is of adult membership of both sexes.

KWAGA. Influencing the Kanuri of Bornu and other districts.

Has affiliation with DOU, of which it may have been originally a branch. It is exclusive, admitting only adult males able to pay the high fees.

JAMBOI. Influencing the southern Mende of Sierra Leone.

One of the several societies said to have been founded by early slavers settled in this land, as protective and recruiting agencies. It is a rival to the local Pagan JOOSAI. Its members have honorary connection with BELLI-PAARO and BOVIOWAH. It has elaborate ritual and secret speech, and a much-

feared protective, fetish medicine. It is of adult male membership, but holds occasional training schools in conjunction with SEMBE for its members' sons.

SEMBE. Influencing the Vai, Gora and Gallinas of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Its Head is *Beri-Nyana*, its novice (who wears a peaked cap similar to those of DOU and PORO) is *beri-beri*, its initiate is *beri-mo*, its sacred enclosure is *beri-fira*, and the society sign is *beri-tamba*. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty, its schools being open to those about to join BELLI-PAARO, JAMBOI and NANAM.

The following story is told of its influence, "The expedition halted at a village for the night where an incident occurred worth recording. Our head-boy called the villagers together and began an argument about food for the carriers. Up to then we had had no difficulty in obtaining this, but these people seemed hostile to us and indifferent to our wants. At last food was brought, but the price demanded offended Ansumanah. He showed his displeasure, as did the salesmen. It looked like the beginning of a quarrel. In the midst of it Ansumanah must have done or said something that I did not catch, the result of this being, first that he was told that food would be provided for himself, and secondly, after further conversation, that the carriers would be supplied. The crowd about him were no longer sullen; some, indeed, looked friendly, and all curious. The leader, an old man, said, 'You have come a long way and are tired: rest yourself in my house.' He turned to the others and said, 'This man is of *Sembe*. He is of the same year as my son.' The result of this was that the people rose and danced with glee about Ansumanah. A great feast was soon in process of preparation, and all was happy anticipation and excitement. The old man hung about our head-boy, cracking his fingers

and saying over and over again, 'Wonderful! Wonderful! It is several years since I saw a Sembe! Welcome! Welcome! Be my guest! Be my son! Be my brother! Accept my home, my wives, my children! They are yours, for you are my blood relation!' It appears that this *Sembe*, about which I enquired afterwards, is a secret society further down the coast, whose principal law seems the hospitality shown my men that night."

NANAM. Another society influencing the Kru tribes of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

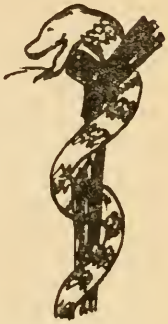
It claims age, guards well its secrets, has a carefully arranged ritual, and exercises protective and purification influence over a large number of people. It is of mixed membership, admitting adults and training its own youth, also accepting PORO youths and girls of nubile age who have passed through the initiatory schools of BUNDU and YASSI.

(3) PAGAN LAW-GOD SOCIETIES

SI'MO. The chief society influencing the Baga and the paganised Susu of French Guinea, and sharing with ORO the honour of being the oldest foundation of its kind on the West Coast of Africa.

Its foundation is attributed to a family or sept of priests, and it remained for centuries the soul of the Baga fighting legions. Its priests, themselves as fierce warriors as any, accompanied these armies as far south as Angola. The society now holds but the shadow of its former power, but the prestige of the name, like that of ORO, is undiminished. Tens of thousands of people revere it, and its members find a ready welcome when visiting districts influenced by more modern associations. There is a local saying "Time and Si'mo are brothers." The Head is sometimes called "The Ancient of Days." Mothers

quieten unruly children by saying "Father Si'mo will have you if you're not good!" The society has influenced Sierra Leone through Poro, and with Oro has influenced Nigeria through Egbo, the Volta regions through Dyoro, the Kameruns through Mungi, the Congo countries through Nkimba and Nkamba, and Angola through Butwa.



Si'mo Stave-head.

Like the other Law-God associations it is mystic and religious, priestly, protective, practises purification, etc. It continues hereditary transmission of office amongst its officials. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty, but has for many years kept its initiations within the confines of a few families.

Oro. The oldest society indigenous to Nigeria (see also Si'mo); now found only amongst the Egba and Oyo peoples.

May have been an ancient phallic cult with *Oloron*, whose voice is the thunder, *Oke*, who rules over mountains and hills, and *Olokun*, the lord of the sea, as the trinity of gods worshipped.

Its Head is the greatest High Priest of his land, but the society over which he presides is now little more than an inner council of Egbo, and it is best known by its annual festival, *Oro-doko*. Its influence, coupled with that of Poro, has spread over almost every part of the West Coast.

It is now of exclusive membership, admitting male adults, but occasionally using the Egbo puberty school for the training of selected sons of its members.

Poro. The mightiest son of Si'mo, and one of the greatest of the African secret societies, influencing

many thousands of the Fula, Kafu-Bullom, Koya, Mende, Sherbro, Susu and Temne peoples in Sierra Leone and other states.

Its name is "invoked as a witness to covenants between neighbouring tribes," and serves as "the best emphasis known for individual oaths." "An oath taken under the solemn term *By Poro I swear* is unbreakable."

"When the mandate of Poro is issued all wars and civil strife must cease, a general truce is established and bloodshed stopped, offending communities being punished by all the spiritual powers of the society." "This wise political institution is disseminated through the country for the purpose of putting an end to disputes and wars . . . the grand fundamental law of Poro is that no blood must be shed while it is in force." "The Poro society as a machine for the people works splendidly."

It claims French Guinea as its birthplace, the Kafu-Bullom district of Sierra Leone as the site of its first lodge, and unbroken activities for many centuries. Although its members now represent so many nationalities, and although there is a Mende claim to its foundation, the evidence shows its beginnings as a work of the Temne people. That nation began as a Baga fighting legion, which, sweeping down from French Guinea, c. 1589, conquered a large portion of the land of Sierra Leone. With those warriors came Si'mo priests. The Baga warriors became the Temne settlers, whose chiefs married Kafu-Bullom women, a tribe that may also have come from French Guinea to occupy the district between the Scarcies and the Rokel rivers, and the Si'mo branch society became Poro, i.e., Our Father's Law.

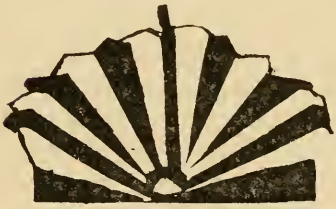
The first historical reference to Poro known to the writer was at the coronation of Naimbanna the First, the Temne king who reigned c. 1680-1719.

When promoted from a district chiefdom to the throne of the overlord, this monarch handed over the office of *Grand Tasso* of the society to Chief Kabinde. This was the man known for many generations as "Black Kabinde," a dominant personality who made the influence of the society the power behind the throne, and largely assisted in welding together the Temne nation. The name of the society became "the dread and terror of the common people," who believed its officials "possessed of the power of devils, who could do whatever mischief they pleased without being affected by it themselves." For a generation after his death, c. 1740, the carefully guarded mummy of Kabinde was the centre of all the real power and authority in the land.

"The most singular law I have yet observed in Africa is what they term the purrah. . . . Any Freeman, after a certain age, supposed about thirty, may become a member of this association. On his admission he undergoes various ceremonies, and is enjoined the strictest secrecy respecting them, which they preserve as inviolably as the freemasons in Europe do the mysteries of their institution; and to which it has some resemblance in other respects, particularly in having a grand master, or head purrah man, in every district or state, and in the non-admission of females." "It presents curious points of analogy with the brotherhoods of the Micronesian Islanders, but appears to be even more potent for good or evil, a veritable state within a state." "It is an essentially mundane and practical institution under an esoteric guise, existing mainly for the health (circumcision) and education of the youths."

Amongst the Mende people it is still a tribal crime to interfere with, or to intrude unauthorised into, a Poro ceremony.

The names of the officials vary according to locality, but the supreme Head of "Grand Poro" is the *Grand Tasso*. There are *Tasso* Deputies in most of the districts influenced. Other Temne officials are *Wuja*, who often acts as Deputy Head, *Laka*, the Champion, *Laga*, the Chief of the Spirits, *Sanko* and *Soko*, chief dancers, and *Ayunkoli*, *Betieli*, *Binimi*, and *Missi*, doctors. The last two and the *Wuja* (*Wujanga*) rule over grades. The council rank is *Kaimahum*, and the council house (also the sacred enclosure) is *Kamegotrun*. At the funeral ceremonies of Paramount Chief Fa Bolo Karifa of Sambaia in June, 1921, the chief of the three officials who represented the society was called *Pendé-Pendé*. The initiates are *yugira* or *yuyira*. In the Mende lodges the Chief of the Spirits is known as *Binni*, and his attendant, whose duty it is to "prepare the way," and who wears a mitre-shaped cap, is called *Bori*. In the Sherbro district the officials are known as *Mangapor*, *Bah Yorgbor*, *Cobess*, *So-santhee*, and *Sopolee*. The two minor degrees are not secret. There is a strong fellowship between the members, as indicated by the proverb, "Fear not death from an enemy, but fear estrangement from a member of your own lodge." Certain selected females are included amongst the officials, known as Mothers of the Spirits, *Mabori* (Temne), *Bum Poro* (Mende).



Poro Mural Decoration.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty, the youths being taught in the schools "history and the laws of chiefdom, mat-making, trapping, fishing, farming, collection of produce, etc."

Egbo. A great organisation influencing the

Efik, Ekoi, Ibadan, and other peoples of Southern Nigeria.

Like Si'mo and Poro it was founded by a legion of fighting men, and the fact that "every Egbo sound must die, when is heard the Oro cry" suggests that it was once a branch of Oro.

"It is mystical, religious and phallic. It practises purification. It is protective. It claims supernatural authority and the whole gamut of occult powers." "It collects debts for its members, and acts as police, safeguarding members' property from robbery and incendiary fires." "Whilst there have been cases of oppression by individual officials the collective influence of this great society has always been for the good of the community in which it functions."

Its Head, who ranks as a High Priest, is the *Grand Egbo*, and his Deputy is sometimes known as the *Idem*. There are a great number of officials, many of them ranking as priests. The principal grades are *Idiong*, *Nkanda*, *Eturi*, *Oku Akama*, *Ndibu* (called "The Mother of Grades"), *Nbawkaw*, *Ebu Nko*, and *Ekpiri Ngbe* (Little Egbo), the first step after initiation.

Several of the above grades have become separate societies, as has the Efik (Ekkpe) and the Ekoi (Ngbe) branches.

"A member of *Egbo* with a grievance has only to rush into the street, look out for a gentleman connected with the society, slap him on the waistcoat place, and that gentleman has then and there to drop any private matter of his own he may be engaged in, call together the grade he belongs to, and go into the case. Or, if an *Egbo* gentleman is not immediately get-at-able, the complainant has only to rush to the *Egbo* House, and beat the *Egbo* Drum, and out come the *Egbo* Officials to his assistance."

The society claims to have "stopped that internecine strife between the Ogwali and the Akena, in which had been jettisoned the chivalry which formerly had prohibited the killing of women and children and cripples during war." It has also caused many intertribal conflicts.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty. Many Europeans have been admitted to its minor grades as honorary members.

Mungi. Influencing the Duala and kindred tribes of the Kameruns. Known all along the coast, and acknowledged and served by many natives who have no tribal affinities with the district of its headquarters. Its ritual is tinged with survivals of Muhammedan ceremonies, and its Head, ranking as a High Priest, is said to be chosen from a family that has long professed that faith. Like the other older societies it has thrown out many strong branches, including Ndembo of the Congo, and Mukanda and Chibados of Angola. "Although wars are now infrequent, the changed conditions being responsible for that, it must be said for this society that its influence has been of great assistance in changing those conditions."

Mungi Dancing Dress.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Nkimba. The greatest of the Bakongo societies. Its influence extends along both banks of the Congo river upwards of three hundred miles inland.

A legend of its origin states that "it was brought from beyond the Niger; from a country far north." It certainly has many patent likenesses to Si'mo and Poro. That of its kindred secret speech has already been noted.

A story of its influence is told by Comber, a Baptist missionary, who with Hartland, a Kameruns official, went up to the Vundu towns on the hills. "As they drew near, the natives came in force to attack them. Comber shouted to them to approach and talk, but their only reply was 'Go away!' He told them they wished to build on the headland, but they would not listen. 'Go away!' 'Go away!' was all they would say. Comber did not like to take 'No' for an answer, and continued his walk towards them. The natives spread themselves out and prepared for a serious attack, but just as things looked critical a man of Manteke, engaged by Comber, ran towards them uttering a strange gabble of words that he trilled song-fashion. It was the language of his guild, and at the sound of it guns were lowered, for more than half of the warriors were brother *Nkimbas*. The man talked awhile, and the natives, finding that the white men wished them no harm, gave permission for the building of the station on the desired site."

Its Head, a High Priest, is known as the *Elder Ebaku*, and his Deputy, who practises as the Doctor-in-Chief to the society, is called the *Eseka*. The members are *mbwamvu anjata*, children of the resurrection.

It has many powerful branches.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Nkamba is the associated women's branch, admitting also at puberty.

Ogboni. Influencing the Yoruba peoples of the West Coast, with headquarters at Abeokuta, and a sacred place within the shadow of a large boulder, called *Olumo*, on the summit of a hill near Lagos.

Was originally an early branch of Oro-Egbo, and has great senatorial, political, social and secret influence. It is more progressive in policy than most of its brethren.

Its Head, ranking as High Priest, is known as *The Ogboni*, and his Deputy as *Alafiu*. There is a Treasurer, *Olowu;* an Arbitrator, *Alakatu;* and an Executioner, *Awaijale* (He who shows mercy in death). Three of the officials, *Oshorbo*, *Egungun*, *Oru* assume the names of tribal gods, other officers being *Okonko*, *Mborko*, and *Nkanda*, most of these ruling grades that are now strong societies. "The *Ogboni* council is the electoral college of the Yoruba people for village headmen, who are not only chosen and stooled by the councillors of the society, but are responsible to them for personal conduct. The power of this council is known and feared, for it is as quick to degrade the unworthy as to promote the worthy." The society possesses a great deal of property in buildings, the *iga*, house, being known by the name of the family in whose charge it is, as the *Iga Eletu Ijebu* of Lagos which is claimed to be the private property of the Eletu Ijebu family.

"The society gives a clan feeling, one of protection, a collective power used for the good of each member." It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Orisha. Influencing the Ekita, Ijebu, Awori and Egbado peoples of Southern Nigeria.

Originally an Oro-Egbo branch that may have separated over some tenet of the worship of *Orisha*, the second son of the supreme Arámfè. Its Head, ranking as one of the most powerful of the High Priests of his district, is known as the *Balogun* or War Lord. Some of the officials are named after tribal deities, as *Odùwa*, *Eleda*, *Olorun*, and others. Other grade-ruling officials who have become Heads of societies are *Egugu* and *Eyo*.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Eluku. Influencing the Ijebu and kindred peoples of Southern Nigeria.

Another ORO-EGBO branch. Has strongly influenced the Gold Coast and some parts of the Congo. Is now little more than a wide-spread social organisation, with protective rights. A woman may be Head of the society.

Its membership, male, admitted at puberty, is said to be co-extensive with that of the Ijebu people.

DYORO. Influencing the Lobi and Dinla peoples of the Upper Volta.

Dyoro "Sacred Place."

A branch of ORO that has been adapted to changing conditions, but is still a religious cult with, as is found in its progenitor, a triple guardianship of gods and a triple power, of religion, of law, and social. It exercises great influence over a wide area. Its ritual is largely phallic. Some of its sacred places contain carved figures and altars similar to that here illustrated.

The chief official is a woman, who ranks as Priestess and is known as *Pann*. The officials are *Subhaka*, Men working in the Shadows.

It is of mixed membership, admitting at puberty

Butwa. Influencing the Batwa peoples right across the continent from Angola to Rhodesia, with its strongest headquarters in Katanga.

The title may indicate "the hidden mystery" or "the beating people," i.e., the people who beat those who pry curiously into their secrets.

The society owns many permanent buildings, council houses and temples, and works through innumerable lodges. It is a great socialistic organisation "protecting the people by the collective power of the people," as was witnessed in its successful stand against the kingly tyrant Msidi of the Katanga, whose boast was "I am the world; there is no escape from me, even upward!" "Politically, Butwa is a tremendous force to be reckoned with. Its unity gives it power, so that headmen of villages, to safeguard and ingratiate themselves with their people, if not already members, join the society on assuming chieftainship."

The Angola Head is known as the *Nangula*, and he is said to be the earthly representative of the god *Songo*. Each official is the head of a grade, the *Inangulu* leading the *bana ba bwanga*, the children of the fetish. The grades are indicated by the number of fetish horns carried. The men are *Katumpa*, *Chimundu*, *Luongo*, *Shinini* (*yamukulakulu*), *Kasumpa*, and the women, *Buyamba*, *Katempa*, *Ngobola*, *Chabo* and *Lubuta*. The members "nurse their own sick, collect amongst themselves for deserving causes, and aid one another in law cases."

It is of mixed membership, admitted at any age, even babies being made members, "being passed through successive initiatory rites as they grow up, but only in mature years being considered to hold full rank."

Nkanda. The branch of Ogboni influencing

the Bushongo (the Bakuba of the Congo Bend district).

"The Bushongo, a remnant of a once great nation, although now merged in the present Bakuba people, keep some of their ancient distinctions, amongst these being their Nkanda secret society, an association of great age and honour of which they are very proud."

Its Head, who ranks as a High Priest, is known as the *Nyenge*, and amongst the officials is the *Moasidi*, who acts as the Poet Laureate of his people. The members are graded into septs or bands according to the year of their circumcision (the society in this respect being almost unique on the West Coast), the head of each being known by the name of the totemic sign of the grade.

It has largely influenced Bweti, Malanda, Ikung, Miwetyi, Elung, Ekongola, Izyoga, Kongold, and other societies, and its name is honoured over a large district.

It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Bundu. The women's society associated with Poro found amongst the Mende and Temne tribes of Sierra Leone, in the Koranko, Limba, Sherbro and Kafu-Bullom districts. Also known in Liberia and the Gold Coast.

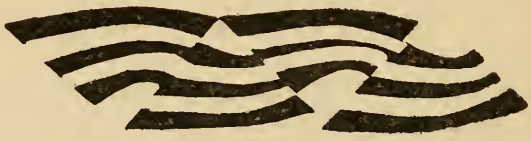
Used to be coextensive with Poro, of which it was originally the female section, but has been much divided, some of its branches, like Ankoi, Sandé and Yassi, being now as powerful as the original society.

Hosts of legends are repeated to explain its beginnings, some of them patently inaccurate, as is, for example, the one claiming it to be the "Mother of Poro," this being founded on a misunderstanding of why the Head is an honorary member of the Poro council. Another claims it to have been founded

by a woman who "came from a country three months journey to the East, where only women live." This country was, it is said, that of Beled-el-Mia, the Woman's land of Upper Bagrimi, a legendary land and people of amazing exploits, the stories of which have travelled extensively through the continent. A similar legend is told of several women's organisations along the West Coast.

It is a purification society practising ancient and elaborate ceremonial, with long periods spent in bush retreats, in which many of the girls are kept at the expense of their prospective husbands.

The Temne members call their Head *Mama*



Bundu Mural Decoration.

Koome, and the officials, *Bum Rigba*, the Mother of the Novices; *Woodya*, the Messenger; *Miseri*, the Tutor of Law; *Kanimahoohn*, the Tutor of Religion, and *Segube* and *Seguru*, Chief Dancers. There is also the important *Na-Sin ku Bundu*, the Voice of Bundu. An initiate is *Yaya*, a full member *Soweh*, and two of the grades *'Normeh* and *'Ndigba*. The Temne officials do not wear masks. The Mende officials are *Adigba* and *Ediba*, their sacred enclosure *Afafa*, the novices *Sol Bees*, and the initiates *Wuni ko Bondo*. Both sections admit their members through puberty schools.

Some time ago this society was made the subject of a play given in the Wilberforce Hall in Freetown, in which the chief characters were *Nafuli Tamba*, the great Temne comedian, *Laingadia*, *Kukuna*

Gorboi, *Madora*, the heroine, and *Segbube* and *Segura* girls. The book and players were entirely Sierra Leonean. In the play some of the archaic words preserved by the society were used, as *finno*, pretty; *fayra*, white; *bee*, black; *laing*, sweet singer; and *cheffru*, fair-complexioned.

AMPORA. The distinctive society of the Mende peoples of Sierra Leone.

May have been the first PORO lodge to become a society. It is said to have made the division at the instigation of a once well-known Mende overlord, to preserve the purity of the ancient ritual. This the title bears out, it being translatable "The One Word," or "The Original Word"; but it is also said to have originated in a scheme for the preservation of the Mende nation, started on the death of a king to prevent his kingdom going to pieces. It was once a powerful organisation, and has influenced the Koranko through ANDOMBA, the Limba through BANBAN, the Lokko through DUBAIA, and the Sherbro people through TORMAI. The associated women's society is YASSI.

Ampora "Lakka" Mask.

Its Head, ranking as a High Priest, is the *Svekoi*. Other officials are the Champion, *Sopwemi* or *Sopwem*, the Moderator, *Famanja*, the Revenger, *Ngeg Bana*, the Lawyer, *Be Kesey*, and the Herald or Ambassador, *Lakka*, whose peculiar mask is here illustrated. The initiated are *Pornor* and the probationers are *Looumbia*. The members grade themselves under the names of the places where they were initiated, as *Bumpe Men*,

or under words that commemorate unusual things, as *Gu-Yura Men*, the "Mende-Rising" men (of 1898).

Like Poro there is a selected woman on its council. It is male in membership, admitting at puberty.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MORE MODERN SOCIETIES

Priestly Associations—Prohibitive Societies—Protective Societies—Purification Societies—Agricultural Associations—Co-operative Societies—Dance, Play and Sports Clubs—Political Societies—Social Organisations—Trade Guilds—War Clubs—Subversive and Criminal Associations.

MYSTIC AND RELIGIOUS, *continued.*

(*b*) *Priestly Associations.*

AYAKA. Influencing the Ibo of Nigeria.

May have branched out from OKONKO, although claims to have originated as a blacksmiths' guild, of which it still retains signs. Was for long antagonistic to the colonisation of that part of Southern Nigeria once known as the British Oil Rivers Protectorate. Its Head, who lives at Awka, is *Osu-Abwala*, the High Priest of the god *Abwala*, and his Deputy is *Owawlaw*. These two are in charge of the Oracle of the society. The councillors are *Umunna*, and there are officials called *Dibia*, *Egwuwu*, and *Ejelle-Eguu*. The initiates are *abaw-maw*, virgin spirits, and the graduates *ikpu-ani* and *umu-chuku*, youths and men of the gods. It has great and widespread influence; is male in membership, admitting at puberty.

EBOMICI. Influencing the Ugo district of Nigeria.

Probably a branch of OVIA, but claiming separate organisation and an unbroken history of

some centuries. Its annual festival is widely known and draws great crowds of spectators. Has prohibition and purification rights. Is of mixed membership, admitting adults.

EYO. Influencing the Awori of Nigeria.

Has well-thought-out ritualistic ceremonies, and a great following. Its medicine is protective even against the results of "breaking the white man's law." The Head and some of the officials rank as priests, representing deities. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

HOMOWO. Influencing the Ga-speaking peoples of the Gold Coast.

A cult for the honouring of the gods, *Nai*, *Sakumo*, *Korle*, and their servants, *Dantu*, *Afieye*, *Guan* and *Oyiadu*. The Head ranks as a High Priest and he has twelve officials as subordinate priests. The Great Festival, held towards the end of August of each year, is an invasion into Accra of many thousands of people, and generally results in a food famine in the district, due partly to the concentration of a larger population, and partly to the fact that fewer country-people remain at work. It is followed by a number of stool and other festivals, accompanied by processions and the firing of guns, the company or community rivalries sometimes causing riots. The society is of mixed membership, admitting adults, and is said to charge high fees for its substantial grades.

IKUNG. Influencing the Bakele of the French Congo.

It is the oldest society of this people, and has its headquarters in the Great Batanga district. Originally a cult for the worship of *Ikun*, a tribal sea deity. Its Head, a High Priest, is the *Ikungele*. It has largely influenced neighbouring societies, as ELUNG. Some of the officials wear disguises of strange animal form, the masks of wood and the

garments of pelts and hides, as here illustrated. The society is of male membership, admitted at any adult age. There is an honorary lodge for selected women.

Ikung Costume.

MALANDA. Influencing the Batanga of French Congo and some of their neighbours of the Kameruns.

A great organisation in power and membership, but without the mystery of other societies, being largely social in purpose. Its Head and three of the chief officials rank as priests. Is protective and has purification rites. It is male in membership, admitting at puberty.

NDA. Influencing the Bakongo of the Belgian Congo.

Claims to be the most sacred and secret of its kind. Has great influence over many tribes residing between the Niger and the Congo rivers, some of its branches having become powerful separate organisations like MUEMBA and NJEMBE. Its Head, a High Priest, called the *Elongo*, is assisted by seven subordinates ranking as priests, each of these also having an assistant. Most of the priests bear the titles of deities. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

NIMM. Influencing the Ekoi of Nigeria, and also found in Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, and in French Congo.

One of the oldest of the religious cults, and one of those that has transplanted itself in the New World, slaves from Nigeria having taken it to St. Domingo, where it became the parent of the Voodoo Society of Haiti and other islands. It has a dual Headship, *Royal Father* and *Royal Mother*, and the rites and signs include phallic survivals. The members

are graded as representing before-birth, babes, children, youths and maidens, adults, and ancients. Of the latter, three are councillors and three are officials, all six ranking as priests. The present organisation is largely in the hands of women, and may act as an auxiliary of NGBE, but it is of mixed membership, admitting both adults and children, the latter through its own schools.

NRI. Influencing the Ibo of Southern Nigeria.

It is a priestly caste, functioning at the stooling (electing and crowning) of chiefs. The name is taken from that of the small town that is the headquarters of the association. The membership is hereditary, recruited from members' sons initiated at puberty but not taking part publicly until ten years later. All the officiating members rank as priests, and the Head acts as the High Priest of the district. The presence of *Nri* is essential if a coronation is to be considered valid, and its benediction ensures a peaceful reign and a long tenure of office. The members travel long distances to overtake their duties. It is said that all in the town live as one family, having their own speech and customs, and allowing no one uninitiated to settle within its borders.

OKONKO. Another society influencing the Ibo of Nigeria.

Associated with AYAKA, and having great influence over the Ibo peoples, of whose four millions or so it claims to have the majority as members. The Oracle has already been described, as has its elaborate system of grading its membership. Its Head, the *Okpala*, ranks as High Priest, and five of its officials are priests. The novices are known as *Belu*, Babes. There is some rivalry between its members and those of AYAKA, both claiming to be the original society. It may have influenced NDITO-IBAN and IBAN-ISONG, and other like associations. It is of mixed membership, admitting

adults by payments and juniors through puberty schools.

"The higher grades of the Okonko women form committees which control all Ibo women's affairs and exercise great influence in various directions. The leader of the committee is ceremonially crowned by a Nri priest, with rites similar to those used in the coronation of a king, and is called *Amwu*, a title equivalent to queen. One does not often see the crown nowadays, a man's hat is worn instead, but no woman other than the *Amwu* may wear a man's hat. In the markets she usually sits on a special stool, in a corner specially reserved for her. Her eyes are ringed about with chalk. She receives royal oblations and tokens of respect in the way of *ojji*, small gifts. The committee controls everything in the town relating to women. In judging cases where women are involved, the chiefs must call upon a member or members of the committee for opinions and assistance in verdicts. The *Amwu* is sometimes asked to help adjudicate in cases concerning men. The committee makes its own laws for the women irrespective of the men."

Okonko Stool.

Oyeni. Influencing the Sempe and other Ga-speaking peoples of the Gold Coast.

Claims to date from before the building of James Fort (1673), which is said to have been erected on the site of the sacred enclosure of the society. The name is that of a Sempe deity, and other gods honoured are *Afeye*, *Agbanafo*, *Asiakele*, *Bosum-Abla*, *Gblamote*, *Langma*, *Lemarter*, *Obotu*, and *Owerner*. These reside

in the rocks and hills and lagoons of the district and in the neighbouring sea, and the places associated with their names are annually visited by the members. Its festival, already described, is held about three weeks after that of Homowo. Up to about thirty years ago the society was allowed to render homage to its founder in a chamber beneath the bastion of the fort, where he is said to be buried, and where there still is a conical mound that may be an altar-tomb; but now its officials are only admitted to the ground above the bastion.

It once had political power, its members becoming renowned for their victories over the Awuna tribe, which they drove across, and penned in on the other side of, the Volta. Its medicine is protective against certain diseases. A feature of the ceremonial is the decoration of the sacrificial bullocks with shreds of red, white and blue material. The Headship is dual, held by a Priest and Priestess. The senior officials are *Elders*, and there is a *Linguist* amongst them. The headquarters is at Accra; the signs are connected with fishing; and the membership is mixed adult.

Ukukwe. Influencing the Bakele of the French Congo.

Said to preserve the ancient ritual of Oro. The Head and three officials are priests. It is protective. Members of this society have some honorary connection with Nkanda, Bweti, and Kongold, and mix with these at festivals and retreats. The officials are of both sexes, as is the membership.

(*c*) *Prohibition Societies.*

Banban. Influencing the Limba of Sierra Leone.

Legendary accounts of its origin attribute it to a divine founder. The ritual is suggestive of its having

been a branch of AMPORA or KUFONG, or an old lodge of PORO. It is mainly social, and its rites largely connected with the enforcement of taboos. It is of mixed membership, admitting adults, but holding occasional puberty schools.

DUBAIA. Influencing the Lokko of Sierra Leone, and some of their neighbours.

A Kuba society founded by AMPORA officials who had migrated to the upper lands of the River Rokel. Also said to have been originally the personal protective agency of an European slaver, who had observed the power of PORO. Probably the present organisation is an amalgamation of both. Is mainly prohibitive in influence. It admits male adults by payment and youths who have passed through neighbouring puberty schools.

GBANGBANI. A wide-spread association found in the northern province of Sierra Leone.

The society fetish, *kontogi*, is well known, being publically carried annually over the Black river in several canoes tied together, accompanied by a throng of pilgrims. Some claim that this official voyage keeps sharks away, whilst others say it does not keep them away, but it renders them harmless to those using the river. *Gbangbani* Tabu is always carefully obeyed. It is of mixed membership, admitting at any adult age.

IZYOGA. Influencing the Mpongwe and Igalwa of the Ogowe district of French Congo.

Claims age, and is powerful and wide-spread. Prohibits certain fruit-foods and certain physical contacts, and also practises purifications. Is of male membership, admitting adults by payments and youths through schools.

KANGAR. Influencing the Temne peoples of Sierra Leone.

An ancient foundation retaining some little power socially through its prohibitions. Uses ritual suggestive

of PORO influence. Is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

KEMAH. The women's organisation affiliated to the last-named.

MANNEKEH. Influencing the Ronietta Temne and the Limba of Sierra Leone.

There is great jealousy between its members and those of PORO, shown in the necessity for men of the latter to resign from their society before being admitted to MANNEKEH. May have been once a branch of AMPORA. Its Head is *Benekelema* and its Messenger *Nemankera*. The latter wears a mask with a megaphone-like beak above a fibre dress; this, and others worn by this society's officials, being said to represent imp deities which patronise the organisation. The meeting place is *Turuma*. Each grade carries a different shaped horn, *aneke*, upon which the members speak to one another. Upon promotion they retain the already acquired horn, the men of the higher degrees being known by their collection of these instruments. The members are known as *Katinka Meneke*, *Obenle*, *Rabenle*, *Manyeke*, and *G'benle*, according to the districts in which they live. The prohibitions are strictly enforced, and any disobedience to them severely punished. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

MAWUNGU. Influencing the Mpangwe (Fang) peoples of the French Congo.

May act as a women's auxiliary to NGI, but has separate organisation and its own officials. Is protective but mostly prohibitive. Retains phallic survivals in ritual and in dress, this last being of the opposite sex. Admits girls at puberty.

NGI. Influencing the Bula and the Mpangwe (Fang, Fan, Panwe, Pahouin) of French Congo.

Affiliated with EKONGOLA, with which it counterclaims parenthood. Has ritual largely phallic, and great power in its purifications and prohibitions.

It is male in membership, admitting at puberty. Its officials mix with those of MAWUNGU.

SANDÈ. Influencing the Vai and Gallinas of Sierra Leone.

Affiliated with AMPORA and using BUNDU ritual, passwords and signs. The Head is *Sande-Jo*, an initiate *Sande-Musa*, and a full member *Sande-Mo*. The girls in retreat are taught cooking, washing, care of sick, respect due to husbands, the law as affecting women, some agriculture, preparation of palm-fruit, fishing, spinning, and other household and domestic duties. Temne and Mende women are allowed honorary membership. It is said that there is a selected man amongst the officials. It admits girls through periodic puberty schools.

TUNTU. Influencing the Sherbro peoples of Sierra Leone, with headquarters amongst those of the Dema chiefdom.

It prescribes the use of certain fishing nets, amongst them the *tumo* (Mende) or *bimbi* (Temne); and possesses great power owing to a potent medicine (a *kontogi* similar to that of GBANGBANI), always guarded by a particular family of Dema. There is an annual ceremony in the bush to propitiate the gods offended by any use that may have been made of the tabu nets. During the trials of 1912, referred to under TONGO-PLAYERS, the members held great religious festivals of intercession for help to be given to those being tried. Non-initiates are not allowed near meetings, on pain of being scorched by fire. The meetings are held in the dry season, as the medicine must not be touched by rain. It protects fishermen by driving away crocodiles and sharks. It is said to have caused the death of Paramount Chief Kai Ngabi, who, in defiance of the fetish, brought a seine-net from Freetown and caused it to be used by some men in the waters about the Turtle Islands. Afterwards he took a journey, and the "voice" of

the society declared: "If anything happens on this journey I shall not protect him, for he has broken my laws!" Three days afterwards came the news of Kai Ngabi's death.

The influence of the society extends to the mainland of Shenge and neighbourhood, but is not strong enough there to prevent Sierra Leonean settlers from using the proscribed nets. It is of mixed membership, admitting adults. An unusual restriction is that the daughters of the priestly family which guards the medicine are not allowed to join BUNDU.

(*d*) *Protective Societies.*

BILI. Influencing the peoples of the Haut Uele, Ituri, and Stanleyville provinces of Belgian Congo.

The Headship is dual and is shared by officials known as "The Father and Mother in the Forest." The chief medicine man is *Nkumu*, and his fetish, *dawa*, is said to prevent certain illnesses and to prolong life. The ritual has ceremonies of purification and is phallic, while the members are still accused of cannibalism. It is of mixed adult membership, with heavy fees for admission.

BOIBENTE. Influencing the Temne of certain parts of Sierra Leone.

The members are the spirits of their own ancestors, and keep as much as possible to darkness and silence. When the "spirits" speak they do so through a *katop* leaf, either put in the mouth or inserted in a bit of split cane and played upon like a jew's-harp. The official dress and masks are fantastic, and the wearers paint their bodies hideously. The members are numerous, and well organised. It admits youths only, the entrance fees being heavy. The society fetish is protective against epidemics.

Dus. Influencing the Mossi and other tribes of the Upper Volta and the Ivory Coast.

Has great power, and has established lodges over a wide area. Is religious in foundation, and claims great age. Like those of Dyoro, its sacred places are marked by clay figures, mostly phallic, grouped about an altar. Claims to possess an Oracle. The benefits of membership include immunity from certain diseases. The Head is *Nenso*, the Man of the Hill, a doctor, *Nion*, the Man of the Forest, while the members are Men of the Shadows. It has many grades, heavy payments being demanded for those of the higher ranks. Some of the masks, like the one illustrated, show the influence of Egypt. It is mixed in membership, admitting adults.

Dus Mask.

Egugu. Influencing the Kukuruku of Southern Nigeria.

The members are *egugu*, disembodied spirits, the "risen from the dead." It has a religious foundation and its Head ranks as a Priest, but it is now little more than a protective agency possessing a powerful fetish. The graduates are *ukuri* and those of council rank *muthamaki*. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Egungun. Influencing the Yoruba peoples of Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria.

Originally a grade of Ogboni and, possibly, of Egbo. The title can be translated "skeleton," and the official mask, like one of Kongold, represents a "Death's Head." Its Head, the *Alapini*, who is of priestly rank, lives at Oyo, and he has *Alagba* (Deputies) in most of the towns and districts

influenced. In keeping with the original idea the Head is also the Executioner, and when he appears as such is accompanied by *Jenju*, his assistant. It is now almost entirely social and protective, and known best for its *Ikunle* Festival and the so-called *Agugu* parties that are tolerated by most of the governments, so long as the horseplay and hooliganism indulged in on these occasions by the younger "skeletons" is kept within bounds. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Ekkpe. Influencing the Efik and other peoples of Nigeria.

Claims to be "original *Egbo*," is highly organised and of great influence. It guards a powerful protective fetish, known and feared over a large district. The Head is *Yor Olulo*, and his Deputy, *Osun*. There is a Champion, *Opiapialabo*, a Singer, *Okonalabo*, a Judge, *Ogbogrualabo*, an Executioner, *Okurubenkerebiobele*, a Jailer, *Oyemabinalabo*, a Policeman, *Osi*, and a Horn-blower, *Oduminawoi*. The members are *nyampa*, and the young initiates, *yampai*. The grades are *Babunboko*, *Abungo*, *Makavia*, *Kakunda*, *Okopgo* or *Okpoko*, and that of council rank, *Aboko*. The members, who show great pride in their organisation, are males, admitted at puberty.

Ekkpo-Njawhaw. Influencing the Ibibio of Southern Nigeria.

An organisation founded by a woman chief "whose power was so great that all the inhabitants of the country were her slaves." The ritual shows influence of Lubuku and Eluku. The members are "ghosts who are destroyers," but the old disorderliness is almost forgotten, and the organisation is now after the order of a social club, with protective powers. It is of mixed adult membership.

Elung. Influencing the Quolla (Duala) peoples of the Kameruns.

May have been once a branch of Ikung, and

is now the great rival of EKONGOLA. Is mainly protective and social. Is of adult male membership, with honorary branch for women.

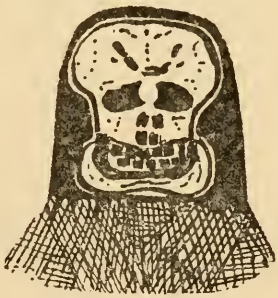
KIMPASI. Influencing the Zombo district of the Belgian Congo.

Acts as the female branch of NDEMBO, the officials of the two societies being interchangeable. Has a wide and powerful influence as a protection to women at certain periods of life. Admits adult women, and has an honorary branch of girls who have passed through puberty schools.

KOFOO. Influencing the Limba and Sanda-Temne of Sierra Leone.

Each member has an attendant guardian deity, and is said to have the power of transferring herself into spirit form and thus to be able to pass through walls, and to loosen bound limbs, etc. Meetings are held in the houses of the members. It acts as the female branch of KUFONG, and is a protective power for mothers, especially functioning at child-birth. Admits its members at puberty.

KONGOLD. Influencing the Abo and Bakundu of French Congo, and found also in Nigeria and the Kameruns.



Kongold Mask.

The members represent after-death spirits, the mask of the Head being a well-carved wooden effigy of Death, in black and white. It was originally a religious cult, phallic, but is now protective and social, with a great membership. Some of the officials still rank as priests. It is male in membership, admitting at puberty, and has a lodge of selected women of honorary rank.

KUFONG. Influencing the Limba, Temne, Koranko, Mende, and Sherbro of Sierra Leone.

The great rival of AMPORA, with which it claims equality of age. Said to have been founded by "genii" who "granted the members the secret of invisible levitation," a legend that may tell of the influence of some Muhammedan society whose marabouts were popularly supposed to have this occult power. "Every member has an attendant spirit who can be summoned if required by uttering certain magical words seven times." It was once a feared political power, but although the boast is still heard that "*Kufong* rules the Limba Nation" it is now only social and protective in character. Its Head is known as *Bai Sherbro*, the title of a king. It has many branches, some known by variations of its own title as Kofo or KOFOO, Kufo, Kofong, and others, like BANBAN and DUBAIA, that are also claimed by AMPORA. It is of male membership, admitting at any adult age, but receiving boys who have passed through PORO, whose ritual it uses.

MUKANDA. Influencing the Western Balunda of Angola and the Belgian Congo.

It is widely known, claims great membership, and preserves many ancient rites and legends and tribal songs in its ceremonies and its schools. It may be a direct branch of MUNGI, whose ritual it uses in part. Its Head, ranking as Priest, is also overlord of CHIBADOS, with whom it shares a protective fetish. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

NDEMBO. Influencing the Bakongo of the Belgian Congo, and also known in Angola and the Kameruns.

Probably the oldest association in the Lower Congo and Northern Angola save BUTWA. Its Head, ranking as Priest, is *Nganga*, the Wise One, and its members, *Nkita*, the Knowing Ones. It has a Player,

Nembimbi, and male and female Doctors, *Lubwiku* and *Kumbi*, the latter being also an official of KIMPASI. It is well organised, is possessed of a fetish power that wards off sicknesses, and "has its use in checking the violence of unjust chiefs." It is an "established and powerful fellowship." The penalty for divulging its secrets used to be "the perpetual slavery of the traitor and his family," but is now merely the threat of a twisted neck, a broken leg or a crooked spine; these being amongst the many signs of distorted things used by the society. Some of its masks show a high form of skill, and considerable originality. It is of mixed membership, admitting adults, but accepting children to honorary association after retreat.

NGBE. Influencing the Ekoi of Southern Nigeria.

Another society claiming to be "original *Egbo*," and often mistaken for the parent society. The Head ranks as a Priest, and he and some of the other officials bear the names of deities. There are phallic rites and signs. Like many others of these societies it possesses a legend that it was originally a women's organisation, and that a man, who had to be initiated because he had learned the secrets, changed its membership to that of males. It admits at puberty.

ODÚWA. Influencing the Nkoranza and other Ashanti-kindred peoples of the Gold Coast. It is known also in French Togoland.

Originally a religious cult, its Head still ranking as a Priest, it is now a protective society, using amongst its rites those of purification. It has a great annual Festival. It is of mixed membership, admitting adults.

OSHORBO. Influencing the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria and other states, with headquarters amongst the Ife people.

May have been an early branch of EGBO or OGBONI, and still has affiliations with these and with EGUNGUN,

Mborko, Nkanda, and Okonko. The likenesses found in the rituals of these named societies point to a common origin, probably that of Oro. It is protective, its fetish being widely known and feared. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Shopono. Influencing the Egba and kindred peoples of Nigeria.

Founded on a religious, phallic cult, and retaining parts of this ritual, but practising protection against smallpox and other like diseases. Was prohibited by the authorities about the beginning of the present century, but survives. The Head and some of the officials take the names of deities. It is of mixed adult membership.

Tilang. Influencing the Mende and Sherbro peoples of Sierra Leone, and admitting Temne honorary members.

May have been a branch of Kufong. Is well known as the possessor of a boasted omnipotent medicine for the curing of certain diseases. Its chief officials rank as priests. Preserves some of the ancient Poro ritual. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Ukuku Mask

Ukuku. Influencing the Kpengwa of the Benito river and of the Corisco Bay district of Spanish Guinea, and the Mpongwe of French Kamerun. Also known in Angola.

The members are "spirits," and as such have special occult powers. Is a great protective social organisation, working through lodges, some of these now independent. The Mpongwe branch is said to have preserved peace for forty years, and to be often now used in

the settlement of tribal quarrels when individual kings or chiefs have failed to do so. A mask worn by an official known as "The Hearer" is here shown. The Kpengwa accept youths through puberty schools and adult males by payment, and the Mpongwe confine their membership to boys of puberty age. There are honorary branches for selected women.

YASSI. Influencing the Mende women of Sierra Leone.

Originally a branch of BUNDU and now its greatest rival. Is affiliated with AMPORA; is influential; claims age, and has elaborate ceremonial. Possesses many permanent buildings. Its Head is *Mama Behku* and her Deputy *Ya-Mama*. It has a Champion, *Kambeh Mambu*, her assistant, *Kambeh Mamsu*, a Messenger, *Kambeh Kehwai*, and a chief councillor, *Kambeh Maba*. Three AMPORA men are amongst the officials, acting as chief drummers. The members have an honorary connection with BUNDU. The girls are admitted through puberty schools.

(*e*) *Purification Societies.*

APOWA. Influencing the Ahanta people of the coastal region Sekondi-Dixcove-Axim, Gold Coast.

The name of this fertility and purification cult is taken from its headquarters, a village on the Axim road some ten miles south-west of Sekondi. Its Head, *Abodi Yánka*, ranks as a High Priestess, and is so acknowledged in the district influenced. The sacred possessions include images bearing the same name as the Head; iron gongs, *dawool*, and the sticks, *dua*, that cause the "voice" to sound out; brass ointment pots for the keeping of the society medicine, and a framed looking-glass for purposes of divination. All save the last are ancient

and valuable. It is of mixed membership, admitting adults.

CHIBADOS. Influencing the Western Balunda, and other Luba-Lunda peoples in Angola and Belgian Congo.

Claims to be the senior association, save BUTWA, of the district, and to use ritual akin to that of SI'MO and PORO, also NKIMBA. May be a modern amalgamation of more than one society, as some

Apowa Images

lodges admit mixed adults and others girls at puberty, the latter in affiliation with the male MUKANDA. Is phallic, and practises fertility and purification rites.

HUMOI. Influencing the Mende and Sherbro-Bullom of Sierra Leone.

An old phallic society, retaining the tortoise as chief sign, and its officials bearing titles representing various phases of fertility. Is affiliated with ANKOI. Practises purification, the public whipping and washing of offending women, and sometimes of all

the members of her family. The offences are chiefly those against tribal morality, and *simongama*, relationships within prohibited degrees. It admits marriageable females, and has an honorary branch for selected men, two of whom act as officials.

Iban-Isong. Influencing the Ibibio and Efik of Nigeria.

The women's branch of Ndito-Iban, but in many ways quite independent and isolated. Has great pride of organisation and boasts a large membership. Admits through puberty schools, the novices being known as *mbobi*, those of small breasts. Women of neighbouring Nigerian societies are admitted as honorary members.

Muemba. Influencing the Duala of the Kameruns.

Of some age and influence, with Mukuku, and originally phallic. Seems to have adopted most of its ritual from Mungi, the oldest of the societies of the district. Is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

Mukuku. The female branch of the above, but with its own organisation and officials. Admits at puberty.

Ndito-Iban. Influencing the Efik and Ibibio of Nigeria.

Its headquarters is at Old Calabar. It is exclusive, charging high fees for admission and promotion. Claims to be as old as Oro, of which it may have been originally a branch. Is now, with Iban-Isong, a powerful social club, practising purification and fertility rites. Some of its officials have power in both societies. Is male in membership, admitting at puberty.

Njembe. Influencing the Mpongwe of the Ogowe district of French Congo.

The great rival of Izyoga, of which it may have been once a female lodge. It is phallic, and although

of mixed membership, most of its officials are women. Has great power as an agency for purification. Admits adults by payment and children through its own and neighbouring puberty schools.

Odwira. Influencing the Ga-speaking peoples of the Gold Coast.

A purification society closely associated with Oyeni (*dwira*, to purify, a word akin to *guare*, to wash), holding an annual festival "for the cleansing of the whole nation." Said to have been founded by Nee Wetse Kojo, the first Manche of James Town, Accra, who landed here "from up coast" with James, in 1642, the first British settler and the man who gave his name to the settlement. Being a wealthy man the Wetse brought with him his own stool and a large number of trained warrior followers, with whom he used to defend the aborigines of the district. "Thus Accra became rid of her foes, and Sempe and Akumaje began to regard their Wetse as their paramount chief, and as he celebrated his *dwira*, stool-washing, annually, with his servants and followers, this soon became the recognised custom." The officials of the ceremony soon organised themselves into a permanent society, under a priest and subordinates, charging entrance and grade fees, and admitting mixed adults.

Ovia. Influencing the Ede of Nigeria.

Its headquarters is at a town of the same name in the Kukuruku country. It may have been originally phallic. It admits selected male adults, with a few honorary women members.

Ramena. Influencing the Temne peoples of Sierra Leone.

Phallic in origin, and largely influenced by Ankoi and Kinki. It has permanent buildings, known as Romari Houses, in which its members, marriageable females, go into retreat. Exclusive in membership, charging high fees. There is an

honorary lodge for men, who must be members of Poro.

Segere. Influencing the Koranko of Sierra Leone.

Uses Bundu and Sandè ritual. Admits female adults by payment and girls through its own schools, and those of the societies named.

THE DEMOCRATIC AND PATRIOTIC

(*a*) *Agricultural Associations.*

Adamu. Influencing the Ijebu of Southern Nigeria.

Originally a lodge of Orisha, and known as "Adamu-Orisha." Uses some Egbo ritual. The officials are fertility experts, taking the names of deities interested in agriculture. It is of mixed adult membership.

Koliumbo. A farmers' club found amidst the Koranko of Sierra Leone.

The members wear an official dress of bamboo rope trimmed with leaves and fastened by *tie-tie*, a fibre used as string. The ritual used is for the preservation and good harvesting of crops, and the festivals are held at times of sowing and reaping. Like the Areoi of the South Pacific Islands the members present elaborate stage plays, in which the lives and doings of celebrated past members are re-enacted, as are the supposed actions of deities said to be interested in the objects of the association; and, like the farce Players of Egypt, they take part in mirthful comedies dealing with parochial affairs and personalities. These representations are part of the festivals. The membership is male, and is confined to those who can pay the heavy fees demanded. There are passwords and signs. The officials

rank as magicians. The office of Head is filled in rotation by the chief members.

NEGUITI. An association of Bakongo farmers. It has a Head, *Mutinu*, and nine *Gangas* or Councillors. To each of the latter is entrusted a particular duty, to *Amobondu* the guarding of the crops, to *Amoluco* the preservation of the farmers' health, to *Embiangula* the task of supplying labourers for the fields, in other words "to charm slaves," to *Metambola* that of "raising the dead," i.e., inducing the dry, dead-looking seeds to grow, to *Molongo* the control of the weather or the foretelling of the same by astrological deductions, to *Neconi* the charming away of disease from the crops, to *Nezali* the scaring away of robbers, to *Negodi* the opening of the ears of the guardian deities, in other words the "curing of their deafness," and to *Nesambi* the procuring of a suitable quantity of rain. As leprosy is supposed by the Bakongo to result from lack of moisture, the last-named official is called "the cleanser of lepers." The association has its own ritual and passwords, secret speech and signs, and holds gatherings of members from which all the uninitiated are excluded.

OLOKEMEJI. A club of agriculturists in Nigeria, with honorary membership for a selected few whose work is not on farms.

There is a council of twelve, of which four are officials, the *Ashipa*, the *Ekesiu*, the *Obawunja*, the *Oluri*, whose duties are somewhat akin to those of NEGUITI. There are sacrifices made to the gods of fertility. A feature of the management is the absence of a Head, a vacant seat at the meetings representing the supreme authority. To this those present speak as if it was occupied. In debate the junior member speaks first and those older follow, the last speech being delivered by the senior of all. The membership is male. An honorary branch

admits women, who pay heavy admission fees. The club claims some age, and preserves a secret, ritualistic, initiation ceremony of a religious character.

RARUBA. A women's organisation of the Temne of Sierra Leone.

It claims age, has wide-spread influence, and is well known for its fertility and funeral rites. Graves are preserved, and trees or bushes planted upon them, the branches bearing the pennants of the association made from black material. There is a potent fertility-producing medicine. The word *ruba* may be translated blessing or benediction, and *Ruba Women* are in great demand, and are paid large fees, for "blessing" anything new and strange, from a baby to a trip on the railway. The membership is selective, confined to certain families, the eldest daughter of a member being chosen for initiation soon after her marriage. The secret signs and passwords may have been originally BUNDU imitations.

YUGU. An association of Duala (Kamerun) countrymen; also found in Angola and the Belgian Congo.

Has great pride of ceremonial, is exclusive in membership, having protracted initiation rites and demanding heavy fees. Its festivals are at sowing and harvest. It is of male membership, admitting adults, and having an honorary branch for women.

(*b*) *Co-operative Societies.*

AGBAIA. Influencing the Sanda-Temne of Sierra Leone.

Founded to assist the chiefs and headmen in their entertainment of strangers. The chief of the district acts as Head, and there is a committee or council of six couples, chosen from the members, who are mostly recently married young people. The association has gradually widened its scope of usefulness,

now often raising subscriptions for deserving objects, such as sending food to children who are at some town school. In the early days a cow was always provided for the funeral feasts of members, and this is still sometimes done. Those who belong to the club are responsible for the building and caretaking of village guest-houses. There are organised dances and galas. Certain signs are used, also passwords, and there is a ritualistic initiation.

Babende. An association of the Bangongo of the Belgian Congo.

The legend of its origin states that a chief "wanted to catch a malefactor, but, as he was old and stiff while the other was young and active, he was not able to do so. Thereupon the chief chose a number of young men to give him help, which they did, and were afterwards banded permanently for similar work. To prevent unfair retaliation by the criminal element of the tribe the members wear masks while at their detective work." It is now of large membership, with thirty-two councillors and sixteen officials working under a supreme Head. The officials go in fours, four judges, four court officers, four messengers, and four policemen. The Head is known as *Elder Babende*, and carries an official staff. The members wear little conical caps at the meetings. The "voice" of the society is a cylindrical drum of one membrane, claimed to be of great age, played by friction, and emitting a "cackling sound unique to this instrument." There are signs, "circles and curves and triangles," and passwords and a secret initiation. There is also a fetish medicine of some power in the district.

Bena-Riamba of the Bashilange of Belgian Congo.

The most remarkable of the associations founded for mutual benefit in Africa. It was established about 1870, when the tribe was divided upon the

question of admitting foreign traders into its country. To help their cause the side that might be called the Progressive Party—which gained the day after the king had joined it—formed a secret brotherhood, after the pattern of that already known in the district as LUBUKU, and called it *Bena-Riamba*, Sons of Hemp. Its headquarters was near the Lulua, an affluent of the Kasai river. The association survived the controversy, and has become a large fellowship ostensibly for mutual hospitality and communal intercourse, but not now altogether and in every way progressive. It has, however, during the years of its existence broken down a great deal of the old intertribal fear and rivalry, and has successfully combated the idea that all strangers must of necessity be of evil intent and therefore tabu. It admits both men and women, and has entrance ceremonies, passwords and much ritual. Although the members need not now be hemp-smokers, on joining they have to take a whiff or two of the fellowship pipe, an implement so large that it needs two men for its carrying. The Society has a Head, a council of eleven, and "officials of the pipe." The members pay heavily for the privilege of joining. There is a secret speech known only to the initiated.

BORRO-MIA-GUNDU. Found in the Pendembu district of Sierra Leone.

A society that came into prominence at Giehun in the Luawa Chiefdom during the 1919 Famine, because certain of its members tried to make a "corner" in cassava. It is a friendly society, members paying in to a central fund and drawing from this in emergencies, and it is also a dance club, holding ceremonial displays that draw great crowds. It has a Head, a council and a host of officials, uses passwords and a secret ritual, is selective in membership because of its high entrance and grade fees,

and elects its members, male adults, with prolonged ceremonies.

LUBUKU. Influencing the Bashilange (Western Baluba) of the Belgian Congo.

Boasts that it once "held the country in subjection," but is now little more than social in power. The title means "Friendship," or "The Place where Friendship Dwells," and is taken from that of the district of its headquarters, the same where BENA-RIAMBA originated. Its Head acts as a priest, and some of its ritual is religious in meaning. It practises purification and has fertility powers. It claims age. It is of mixed adult membership.

MBORKO. Found amongst the Aro of Nigeria.

A branch of OGBONI with special co-operative principles, of great influence and power. Is exclusive in membership, charging greater fees than any other of its neighbours. Has material as well as occult benefits, aiding with legal advice and acting as a funeral club. Admits adult males, but has a small branch of selected women members, generally chosen from the wives of officials.

OLONGUMBU. Influencing the Bihé district of Angola.

Originally a "police" association on the lines of BABENDE, punishing those who broke tribal laws. Its officials still bear titles suggestive of this duty. It is now largely social, and is recognised by local chiefs and has "a wholesome effect in maintaining good behaviour and keeping the people law-abiding." It is of mixed adult membership.

WANKA. Influencing the northern province of Sierra Leone.

Practises purification, and educates its young people in crafts and domestic science and, in the case of the girls, in the curbing of sexual desires and in the duties of wives and mothers. Its members have some affiliation with GBANGBANI. Graves

are protected, and certain benefits shared by young mothers. It is of mixed membership, admitting at puberty.

ZANGBETO. Influencing the Ewe-speaking tribes of French Dahomey.

Like BABENDE in foundation, and has become protecting, purifying, and social. Its title may mean the "Voice heard in the Night," or the "Secret Voice of the Darkness," and advantage is taken of the fear such a title produces to assert authority. It has had a changeful history, now police, now robbers, but its modern form is that of a friendly society, making payments to members in need, and conducting funerals. It has a large membership. The Head ranks as a Priest. There is a council of five, and the same number of officials. There are five grades, novices are introduced by five members, take five oaths, and are five years before becoming full members. It is male in membership, admitting at puberty.

(*c*) *Dance, Play and Sports Clubs.*

AIYASA. An association found amongst the Temne of Sierra Leone.

Its drama-dances have gained more than local repute. The sign of the association is a string of cowries of nine shells in groups of threes. These may be worn as necklaces or as cap or hair ornaments. It holds an annual "midnight frolic," when the members appear daubed thickly with some black ointment, wear masks made of grass and reeds ornamented with bits of coloured rag and paper, and, unclothed save for head-dress and ointment, frolic round the villages with weird cry and dance, likewise song. At the first cock-crow they all vanish. To wait for the second, they believe, would mean

disaster. There are elaborate rules and ritual, and the entrance and grade fees are heavy.

Ankumunko. Another Temne dance club of Sierra Leone.

Its patron saints are the after-death spirits of former members. Over each of their dances a particular spirit is said to preside, and one of the dancers is dressed to represent this *krifi* or spirit. This individual is the president of that particular dance, and exercises during it supreme authority. When he sits all the others remain perfectly still; when he rises all shout acclamation. One of the dance masks is of wickerwork in the shape of a hood, the face being a circular plate of wood painted in black and white. The Head, *Anduka*, wears a *kalolum*, a grass and fibre dress, and carries a small bull-roarer known as *Okrifi katon santok*, the *krifi* that walks on its nails, that is, on tiptoe, softly. It is of palm midrib and fibre. The members make excursions from village to village singing, carol-fashion, at the houses of their friends. They help out the tune by holding the skin of the throat taut and striking their adam's apple. A solo may be sung, the others accompanying by humming in shrill, eerie fashion. Like the Dukduk, they do his at full moon. There is an initiation ceremony, the *Duka* making a small trough in the earth, from east to west, and planting about it sticks kept moistened by saliva. Within this tiny sacred enclosure the members *bempa*, make sacrifice, by placing miniature offerings within a toy shrine. Beads and small black and white stones are used. There is a secret speech that the new member must learn "lest the *krifi* wishes to speak to him." Ordeals are also enforced, the novices having to "run the gauntlet" between graduates armed with rods.

Baya-Gbunde (The Traitor Catchers) is an association of Mende boys of Sierra Leone.

Instituted early in the nineteenth century after an epidemic that caused the death of many children, the disease being explained as the machinations of a malignant deity, as in *Chemosit* of "Moterenik" (an eastern society), whose "evil eye" might be observed looking towards the villages from the bush. Whatever its origin the club now appears to be an amateur organisation, built up after the pattern of a local secret society, of youths banded for the doing of daring deeds, as are some English and American boys for the emulation of Deadwood Dick and Buffalo Bill. Lodges or branches of the organisation are very wide spread. The sign of membership, or one of them, is a one-eyed man, and the members cover one eye at their meetings. They hold processions, and when these appear the village mothers keep their babes safely to the house, as did the Neapolitan mothers when Jettatore di Bambini, the fascinator of children, made his appearance. The club has a Head, a council, officials, and uses passwords and "a quaint jargon of clipped words with which to greet each other."

KALOKO. One of the best-known Temne dance and play clubs of Sierra Leone.

The Head represents and takes the name of the minor deity Kaloko. The man taking this office is hidden beneath a well-carved wooden mask painted in bright colours, as are some of his officials. The announcement of a performance is the cry *Kaloko beko*! ("Kaloko is coming!") When a crowd has been gathered the members "beg Kaloko to begin," by performing a ritual dance. Afterwards the Head, usually an expert actor, commences, his every movement being copied by his attendants. A sacrifice is made in the midst of the display, some man or woman being "captured" from the throng of onlookers, tied with *enepel*, and brought before *Kaloko*, who officially "kills and eats" the victim.

Usually the one chosen for this is a candidate for membership. The ceremony is rigidly ritualistic, the grass used for the binding being gathered at midnight, and the binding itself following an approved plan. The bound person is swathed cocoon fashion, with grass ends standing out back and front, frayed into tails. Before the unbinding takes place a ransom must be paid. The society is well organised and of large membership. There is a complete ritual used, said to be ancient, and many passwords and signs. The membership is of young people.

Kure. Another Sierra Leonean mixed dancing club.

The members are admitted as children, from the age of five years, and gradually promoted through many junior grades to those filled by the adults. It holds a period of seclusion in the bush, sometimes under its own auspices and sometimes with Poro and Bundu. During the retreats the children are taught the ancient Temne and Koranko dances. The costume is a skirt of palm-fibre dyed black, with many armlets and leglets trinket covered. Hide and shell rattles are used as accompaniments to the dances. The admission fees are goods to the value of a sovereign. There are signs and passwords taught by the Head and the officials, two of whom act as law-officers at the admission of adult candidates. The senior officials are elected for life.

Ofiokpo. Influencing the Andoni of Nigeria.

Shows signs of being originally part of Oshorbo, and uses ancient ritual that may have come direct from Egbo. Is of good organisation and wide-spread in power. Holds annual dances of great repute. Is of male membership, with an honorary lodge for women.

Owu-Ogbo. Found amongst the Ibani of the Lower Niger district.

Is noted for its drama-dances. Practises purification and some fertility rites. Is of mixed membership, admitting adults, and charging heavy fees.

WUNDÉ. Found amongst the Gpa-Mende of Sierra Leone.

A society imitating in rite and organisation PORO. It gives athletic displays that draw crowds of spectators, for full membership is only granted to those who have won some contest in these sports. The principal members are the admired *agonothetes* of the district who, because of their proved prowess, superintend the games of the others. There is a council of sixteen members, each presiding in rotation. The initiation is a "death" after the manner of that of PORO and BUNDU. The society is protective. It holds fertility dances at sowing and reaping, and at coronations, at festivals of birth and marriage, and at the birthday celebrations of its members.

YASI. A Congo dancing club found amongst the Igalwa and Mpongwe.

It is of mixed membership, has secret rules, and is governed by a council that, like OLOKEMEJI, is acephalous. It organises festivals on the lines of the old English fairs, during which members compete for dancing prizes. In many respects it seems a part of the organisation of the IZYOGA society, whose officials are also the officers of YASI.

(*d*) *Political Societies.*

EPE. Influencing the Aro of the Lagos district of Nigeria.

A branch of NGBE that these people, one of the most intelligent and ambitious of the Yoruba-Kindred tribes, remain true to, and have made a great political force, with lodges covering a wide

district. It is of elaborate ceremonial and much secret organisation. Admits mixed adults.

IDIONG. Influencing the Efik, Egba, Ibibio, and other peoples of Nigeria.

The most aristocratic branch of EGBO, and still acting as the senior grade of the parent society, although in possession of its own active and well-known, powerful and complete organisation. It is very exclusive, charging high fees, and accepting members only from those holding high grades in EGBO. It retains the old Efik mark amongst its signs. There are only two grades, probationer and member. The Head is *Ndem Efik* and his Deputy, *Abaw-Efik*. The councillors are *Abiadiong*. It is said to jealously guard the ancient and original ritual of EGBO, and to use its archaic and secret speech in more complete manner than does any other branch. It might be called a social club. It is male in membership, admitting adults, but each member nominates a female honorary associate, those chosen being well-known women of the districts influenced.

"Eveleigh Smith and his companion, the Vice-Consul of the country, reached the outskirts of Impoti, the capital of the Oket district, in safety, but were there attacked by a crowd of natives who desired to prevent their entry into the town . . ." (After both had been wounded in the ensuing fight), "one of their followers, who had been delayed on the road, arrived. Immediately hostilities ceased. There was a great gabble of talk around him, but no weapon raised to do him harm . . ." (The attackers withdrew, and) "the servant explained that he used the same language as the men of the town, the speech called *Idiong*, and that if he had arrvied sooner no attack would have been made, for all travelling under the protection of an *Idiong Man* might safely enter Impoti."

Joosai. Found amongst the Mende of Sierra Leone.

A branch of Kufong that was once "a mighty power in the land," but which has become the amusement of a few politically ambitious people. Members have certain privileges when visiting Kofoo and Kufong lodges, and often go into retreat with men of the last-named society. It is a great rival of the Muhammedan-Pagan Jamboh (Jamboi). Its officials are well known and exercise great power. It is selective, charging heavy fees, admitting adults to full membership and youths who have passed through neighbouring schools to honorary association. There is also a lodge for women, a member of which is eligible for election as the society's Head.

Joosai Mask.

Kinki. Influencing the Kafu-Bullom of Sierra Leone.

A branch of Bundu established about the beginning of the nineteenth century. Has been of great political importance, and is credited with having been behind the troubles that arose between the new colonists and the Bullom peoples between 1808 and 1820, the early days of the Crown Colony. Its Head is known as *Mama Bullom*, and she is given at all public ceremonies the honours of chief's rank. It is of female membership, holding occasional puberty schools, and also accepting girls who have passed through those of Bundu.

Owo. Found amongst the Ekita of Nigeria.

A branch of Ayaka, first founded in the town of the same name, a few miles north of Benin City. It is shorn of most of its old power, but is still a political association known and feared in the land. It is of male membership, admitting at puberty.

(*e*) *Social Organisations.*

ANDOMBA. Found amongst the Koranko of Sierra Leone.

An old society, using the elaborate ceremonial of AMPORA, that has become a well-known social organisation, with dance-displays as one of its chief features. It is of male membership, admitting both adults and youths, and selected women.

ANKOI. Influencing the Sherbro-Bullom people of Sierra Leone.

May be a branch of BUNDU but claims separate origin prior to the establishment on the northern shores of the river of any lodge of the greater association. It has a wide influence, and possesses great pride of ceremony. The Head is known as *Mama Ankoi*, and the holder of this office occupies an important place in the councils of the district. It is a rival of KINKI, but a friendly one, the members of each mingling at retreats and processions. It is of female membership, admitting at puberty.

BWETI. Found amongst the Bakele of the French Congo.

An important social organisation, male in membership, admitting at puberty, but having selected women as honorary members.

EBERE. Influencing the Akuna-kuna of Nigeria.

Acts as the women's branch of EKENE. Has great influence. Practises protection and purification, and gives monetary and legal advice to its members. Admits both adults and girls.

EKENE. Influencing the Akuna-kuna, and has members amongst the Kwa of the Cross River district of Nigeria.

Was a political force at one time but is now mainly social, with an elaborate and carefully guarded ritual. Some of the signs are phallic. The officials act for EBERE, its female branch, with equal

power in both societies. It is of male membership, admitting adults, but holding periodic puberty schools for the sons of its members.

ETURI. Influencing the Ibibio of Southern Nigeria.

Claims to be a branch of original EGBO, and used to have great power, but is now little more than a society of holiday makers. It is skilfully managed and has many grades, all being at heavy charges, as are the entrance fees. Has a well-known medicine, said to be made from the heart of a lion, for the protection of its members. There are phallic symbols in use, and purification ceremonies. It holds annual drama-dances and festivals. It is of mixed adult membership.

Eturi Costume.

GELEDE. Found amongst the Egbado of Nigeria.

Originally a phallic cult but now a great social organisation with largely attended festivals. It is of mixed adult membership, demanding heavy fees.

KONO. Another association of the Koranko of Sierra Leone.

A branch of TILANG, with affiliation with the women's SEGERE. The Head, who has priestly duties, is known as *Konoiyare*. It is exclusive, demanding high fees, and admitting adult males after an unusually long probation.

OVATO. Found in the Geduma district of Nigeria.

May have been a branch of Egugu, and is of social importance only. It admits adults of both sexes.

Ovra. Found amongst the Ebo of the Benin district of Nigeria.

Is social and protective, charges heavy fees, and admits mixed adults.

Tormai. A Sherbro society of Sierra Leone.

Its Head is known as *Svekoi*, and a probationer as *bangan*. The members wear red masks and red-dyed aprons. It possesses elaborate ritual and ceremonial, and holds annual dances of some repute. It is of mixed membership, admitting adults, and charging large entrance and grade fees.

(*f*) *Trade Guilds.*

Bakelebroa. The guild of the blacksmiths of a tribe of the same name, whose home is the Portuguese enclave east of Kabinda and north of the mouth of the Congo.

It is of selective, hereditary membership, and has honorary members of the sons of chiefs. The guild has long used lightning conductors said to have been the invention of the founder; slender clay columns erected near their smithies with small pools of water at their base.

Kambonbonke. A guild of Temne blacksmiths of Sierra Leone.

It claims ancient foundation, and has a complete organisation, with Head, council, grades, initiation ceremony, passwords and secret speech. It is of a religious foundation. "The shadow of a stranger falling across a smithy whilst work is in progress may cause an instrument, especially an implement of war or hunting, to be remelted and refashioned, whilst the prayer is muttered vigorously, 'May the soul of this spear (or whatever it may be) remain

pure!' A common petition chanted to the music of the anvil is as follows, 'Make this iron strong: this work good: our wealth great: and ourselves, our work, and our family, blessed.'" The sign of the guild is a spear of iron tipped with brass. The chief grade is limited to twenty-seven members, of whom seven are officials. The membership is hereditary, but none are elected by reason of birth alone; not all the sons of a deceased member, for instance, being allowed to join. The election must be the result of an unanimous vote. The guild preserves much ancient and interesting tribal lore.

MIWETYI. A Shekani society of Nigeria. Also known in French Congo. An ancient guild of iron-workers, with membership still restricted to those who have to do with the craft. Uses the ritual of MALANDA and includes women in its ceremonies.

(*g*) *War Clubs.*

EKONGOLA. Influencing the Duala of the French Kamerun.

The most ancient of the societies found amongst this people, and, as its name suggests, founded by a band of warriors. Branches of it are found in Nigeria, Dahomey, Gold Coast, and the Ivory Coast. Its Head, a man, is known as the *Mother of Ekong*, and the processional dress is that of the opposite sex. It still has great power, but mainly as a protective agency. It is of male membership, admitted as adults, with an honorary branch for women.

ABAM. Found amongst the Aro of Nigeria.

Was originally a militia, the members of which kept themselves in a state of readiness for war whilst going on with their daily avocations. Any town having a dispute with another made attempts to win over the *Abam* to their side, and the town that did always won. They were the foes of EKU-MEKU, and

tradition holds that the *Abam* were invariably the victors. By their aid the Aro people conquered and settled a large portion of the Ibo country. There still stand towers near the Ibo towns that were built as defences against these civilian-warriors; thick clay walls tapering upwards to a decoration of empty gin bottles, and with an upper room from which the defenders hurled their weapons. The moats also found around some of the towns are other relics of these defences. It is claimed the ABAM understood trench warfare. After one or two attempts to return to the old calling, after the British occupation, the members settled down to one more peaceful, becoming a social organisation. There is an initiation ceremony, entrance and grade fees, secret passwords, a supreme Head, who is elected for life, a council and officials.

EKU-MEKU. Found amongst the Ibo of Southern Nigeria.

A war club that has had a long and an eventful history. The title may be translated "The Silent Ones," being a corruption of *ekwumekwu* (those who do not speak but who breathe lightly and move like a breeze passing through the forest). It was first known as a body of warriors of the forest districts of the Asaba hinterland, who had sworn allegiance to the king of Iselle-Ukwu. They had laid their weapons crosswise on the ground and over them had clasped hands and sworn a solemn oath of loyalty. That oath stipulated that any revealing its secrets should be slain, and that the executioner should be his nearest friend. They whitened their bodies, wore woven hats or helmets of dyed *koko*-leaf stem, and chest and back protectors of similar material. Shields of plaited palm stem were carried, and they were armed with well-sharpened machettes and with guns. Their march was always headed by one bearing a bottle-shaped gourd or calabash of

"protecting" medicine, warranted to give courage and to turn aside threatening weapons. In the centre of the force marched the buglers, who sounded the advance and inspired the warriors with calls on the *akpelle*, a long cucumber-shaped calabash with both ends cut off and a blow-hole in the centre.

After the British occupation the Eku-Meku degenerated into a band of highway robbers, and had to be frequently broken up and punished. But gradually the nature of the organisation changed, and it is now merely a social club, retaining picturesque reminders of the past in costume and ceremony, one of the latter being a mimic tournament or assault-at-arms that is always largely attended. At this the judges are the district chiefs, and prizes are awarded to those of the *ikolobia*, young braves, who show outstanding skill and endurance. The events being open ones there happens sometimes that the Abam and the Eku-Meku, old enemies, are found in friendly rivalry. Initiates are still sworn into membership over crossed weapons laid on the road as of yore, and the ancient fetish medicine is still carried, and the unusual instruments played in the processions. There is a large membership, secret signs and passwords are used, and a special speech. The society admits both male and female adults, the women by their membership having special privileges in the districts of their residence, and being free from all molestation.

SUBVERSIVE AND CRIMINAL

Alligator Societies. (The native "Crocodile" associations.) These have been, and are, especially notorious between the Sierra Leone and the Volta rivers. In the Tonko Limba chiefdom of the Karene district of Sierra Leone four members of an association of this name were sentenced to death, in 1911,

for the murder of a boy, and five years after, in the Barri chiefdom, a case was proved of a young alligator having been used by members of a similar organisation for criminal purposes. The one of most extensive membership has its headquarters in the Bassam district of the Ivory Coast, with some Aku and Kru members in other states. This society possesses the model of an alligator used in ceremonies. It boasts of affiliation with like criminal organisations in the southern United States. Another society, long known in the Gambia, used an alligator skin, oiled into flexibility, in which a boy was placed for its navigation. A society of Sierra Leone also uses a model of the beast, a *kunkubé* (Sherbro) or *ilendei* (Mende) made of two dug-outs so placed as to form an enclosed hollow hull, the prow carved to the resemblance of the animal's head, the eyes being tiny glass windows. The general belief was that this craft had the properties of a submarine. When weighted the top was barely visible above the water. It was propelled, through holes in its sides, by paddles shaped like alligator legs, and was made watertight by leather, beeswax and other vegetable resins. The crew consisted of from four to six men, one, called the "capturer," being chosen for his great physical strength. There are many stories told concerning the canoe's construction. From the day the hewers commenced to fell the trees to that when it was finished, all the work was done in secret silence, although endless incantations and mystic rites were being performed. At the launch there was a full-dress ceremony and sacrifice. It is said that if the victim managed to escape he or she was for ever after crazed and dumb.

Baboon Societies. (The native "Ape" or "Chimpanzee" associations.) Societies of this order are known in the hinterland of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and in the Volta regions. Since 1910

notice has been taken of "Ape Men" in the Pujehan district of Sierra Leone. Sometimes the hide of the animal is used as a disguise, but more often marks are made on the victims to represent the wounds made by the teeth of the beast.

Boa Societies. (The "Python" associations of the natives.) A society of this order is known amongst the Mende of the Ronietta district of Sierra Leone.

Leopard Societies. Associations of this kind are frequent, as that of the Koinadugu district of Sierra Leone, whose members were prosecuted in 1914, and that of the TONGO-PLAYERS described below.

Panther Societies. These have been known in French Guinea and on the Ivory Coast. On Tamara, one of the Los Archipelago, there are men and women convicts whose punished crime was membership of this order of organisation.

All the above organisations are cannibalistic in practice.

TONGO-PLAYERS. The Sierra Leonean society that became notorious because its members became affected by the results of the murders that caused the "Human Leopard" enquiries and trials of 1912, and the following years.

The title may have been adopted from that of the *tongora* or clubs carried by the chief officials. It is said to have been started about the Eighties, mostly amongst the Gpa-Mende and those in the Bumpe chiefdom, as an organisation of leopard-men hunters, and was at first honestly employed in putting down the pest, but, as its membership increased, it grew corrupt, tyrannical, and itself criminal. The Head is *Buamor Neppor*, and he has two assistants, *Akawa*, Big Thing, and *Bojuwa*, Great Thing. The ceremonial place is *Mashunda*, and the annual gathering, *Korbangai*. It is of male adults, admitted by payments. The sign is a leopard's claw. The Head carries a staff, covered with the

skins of wild animals, and with a circle of iron spikes at the head. The officials carry medicine horns.

In 1891 the *Buamor Neppor* was responsible for the burning alive of ninety people in the Imperri chiefdom, and the government proclamation of the next years against this summary and crude "justice" was the first of several legislative efforts to stamp it out. In nine years 186 persons were charged with belonging to the society, and 87 of them were convicted and sentenced to death. Then followed the "enquiries" mentioned above, conducted by three special commissioners, when a great deal of information was elicited as to the organisation and practices of the society. Out of fifty-four persons tried for implication four were executed, three condemned to life imprisonment, and many banished the country. Amongst the latter was a Paramount Chief, and amongst those executed was a Sub-Chief; moreover in what was called the Yandehun Case a native minister of religion (who had as long before as 1905 been tried for cannibal murder and acquitted) was expelled the country.

At the trials the charge of cannibalism remained not-proven, but it was established that all the common people thought the society officials had power to change themselves into the beast they represented.

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